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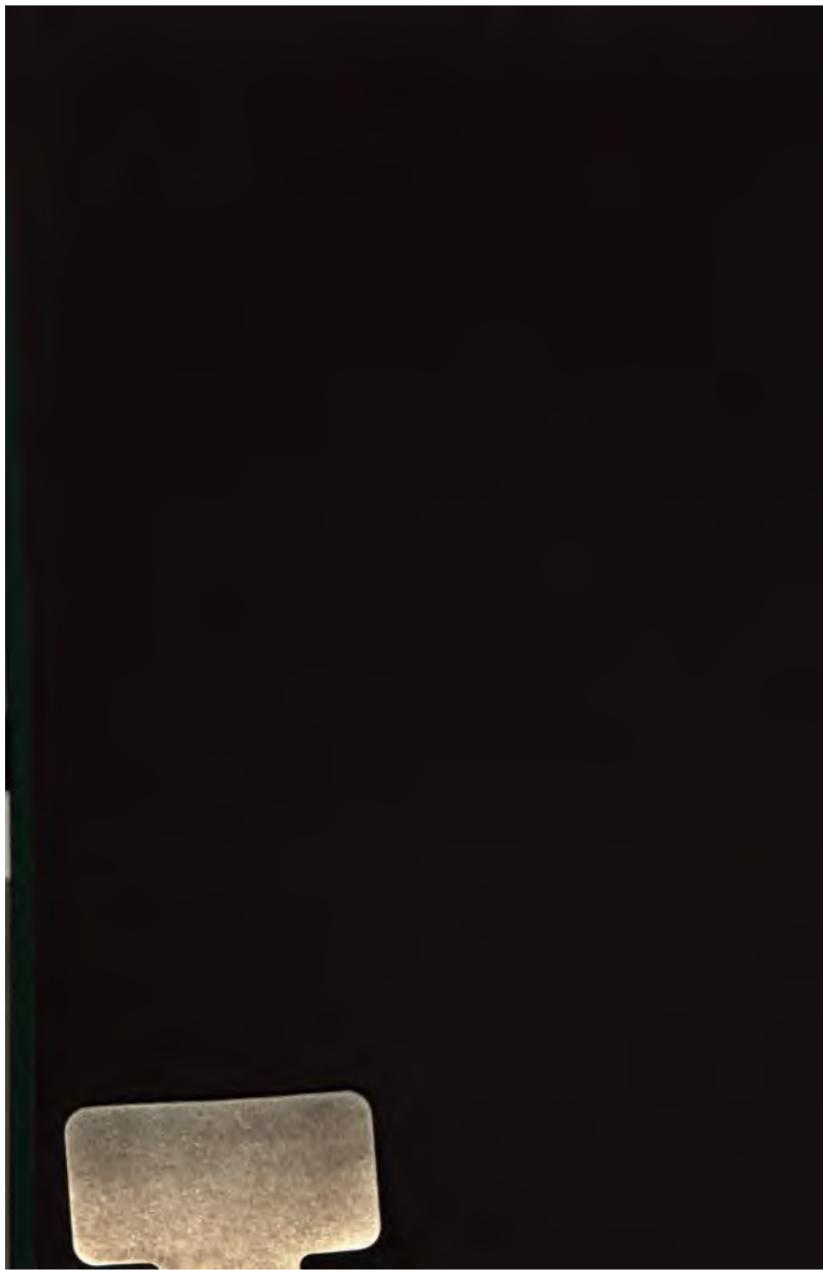
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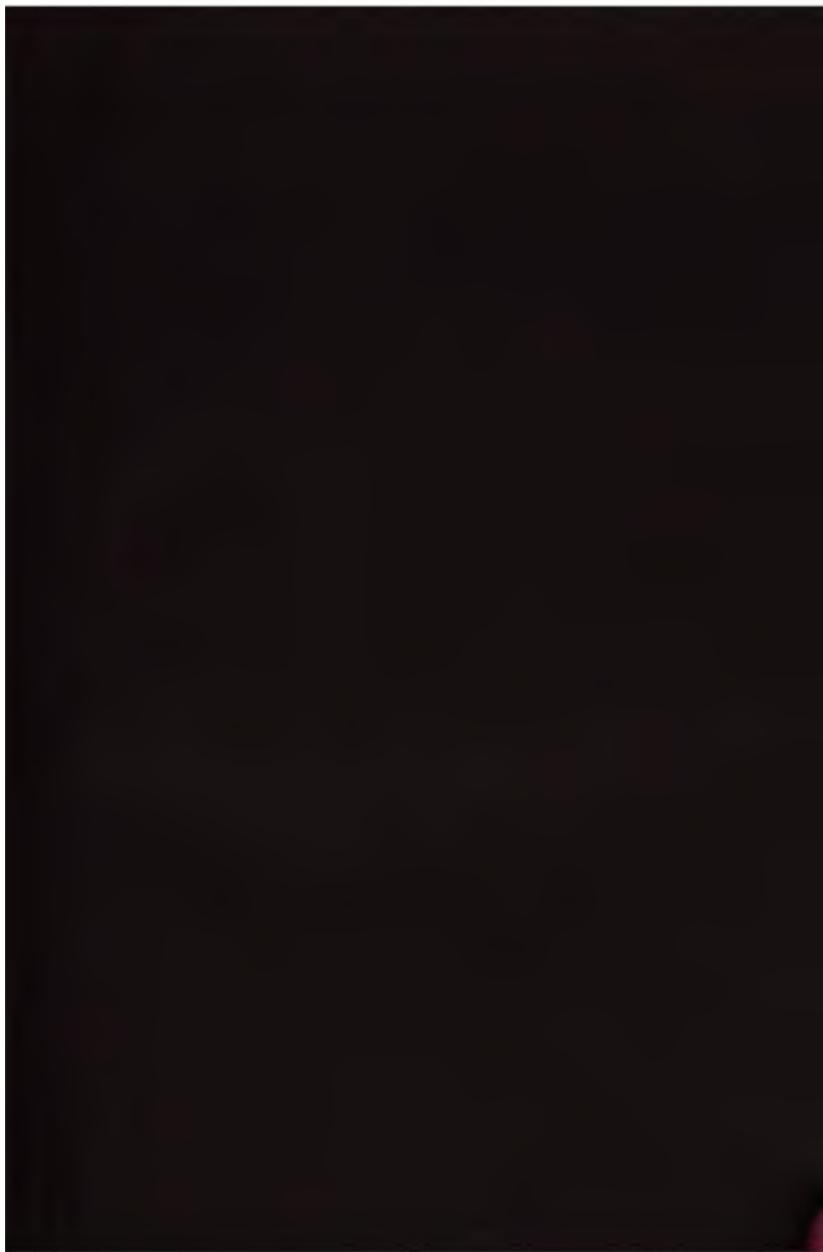
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EARTH'S WORK

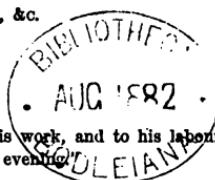
AND

HEAVEN'S REST.

BY

REV. JOHN PHILIP, M.A.,
FORDOUN,

AUTHOR OF "EARTH'S CARE AND HEAVEN'S CURE;" "RAYS OF LIGHT:
OR CHURCH THEMES AND LIFE PROBLEMS,"
&c., &c.



"Man goeth forth unto his work, and to his labour,
till the evening."

EDINBURGH:
ANDREW ELLIOT, 17 PRINCES STREET.

1881.

141. n. 116.



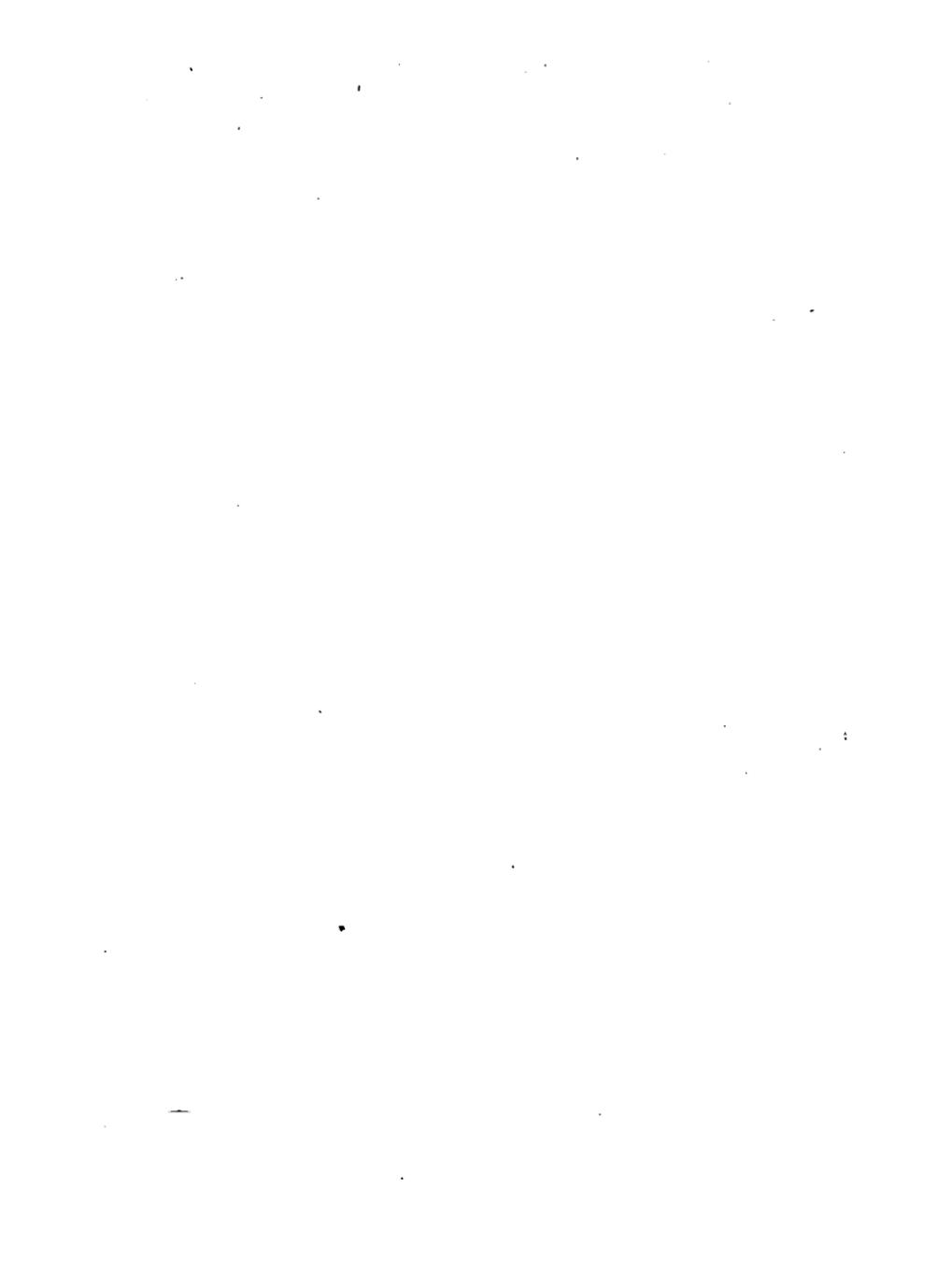
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INTRODUCTION.



HIS treatise is intended as a sequel and companion to "Earth's Care and Heaven's Cure."

Although we may cast our care, yet we may not cast our work on God.

But work may sometimes be the best cure for care. Idleness and ennui breed many cares. True it is, as has been eloquently said—"The capacity for ennui is one of the signatures of man's immortality. It is his very greatness that makes inaction misery." Such misery can be relieved only by work.

On the other hand, it is no less true that work often involves worry and necessitates care. How to dispose of the care does not fall, unless incidentally, to be handled here, but may be learned from the former treatise. Avoiding all needless repetition, our object here is to deal with work alone, our life-work, and to deal with it in a plain and practical way.

Man was not made to be idle, not in Paradise even. And now, in this sin-cursed earth, there is added labour to work. "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou

eat bread." But, under the economy of the gospel, the curse is turned into a blessing. There is no harder work than to do nothing. Men would grow to be giants in wickedness, if left to grow up in idleness.

Work, viewed even on its negative side, as a preventive of evil, is a signal blessing. How much more, in its power to elaborate great and important results! It is a positive and potential factor in moulding character and shaping destiny. This is true both of manual and mental labour, and, above all, of Christian work.

Work is a great educative power. As Mr Gladstone said to the students of Glasgow University—"Effort, gentlemen—honest, manful, humble effort—succeeds, by its reflexive action on character, especially in youth, better than success."

Work is necessary for the exercise and development of man's physical, intellectual, moral, and spiritual nature. Without it, his noblest faculties would lie dormant, or run to waste. Work is essential to the attainment of a true manhood, and of all real greatness. As one says—"Hard work has had a great deal to do with grinding every hero, and every true king that the world has seen."

Without work, we could never be educated, and trained for the work and worship of heaven. Work itself, if only done in a right spirit, may be turned into

worship. Christians are a royal priesthood, and should consecrate all their work to the service and glory of God. The faithful fulfilment of the varied ministries of earth will best qualify and prepare them for the lofty sphere they are destined to fill in the heavenly temple, to all eternity.

And not only will the work of earth prepare for the service of heaven, but for the rest of heaven. The working-man best earns and enjoys his night's rest. "The sleep of a labouring man is sweet." And doubly sweet is the rest of the Christian labourer, who lives and labours for Christ. "His chamber is the chamber of peace, whose window opens towards the sun-rising." And when the morning-star shall be seen on the brow of heaven, and the eternal day shall dawn, how thrilling the Master's well-done, and the Master's welcome —"Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!"

" Man, in the morning, to his task goes forth,
 And rests at even,
So, Christian, know that labour is for earth,
 Repose for heaven."

“ We need not bid, for cloister'd cell,
Our neighbour and our work farewell,
Nor strive to wind ourselves too high
For sinful man beneath the sky:

• The trivial round, the common task,
Would furnish all we ought to ask ;
Room to deny ourselves; a road
To bring us, daily, nearer God.

“ Seek we no more ; content with these,
Let present rapture, comfort, ease,
As Heaven shall bid them, come and go :—
The secret this of rest below.

“ Only, O Lord, in thy dear love
Fit us for perfect rest above ;
And help us, this and every day,
To live more nearly as we pray.”

KEBLE.

I

WORK EAGERLY SOUGHT.

~~~~~  
“What shall I do, Lord?”

Acts xxii. 10.  
~~~~~

My sins deserve eternal death,
“What shall I do?” or whither flee?
Lord, thou didst die to save the lost,
I lift my trembling heart to thee.



HE occasion on which the above question was asked was a memorable one.

Saul, the youthful, aspiring, high-souled Pharisee,—the fiery Jewish zealot, the red-hot persecutor,—bearing a commission from the High Priest, was on his way with an escort from Jerusalem to Damascus, and, “riding on his high horse,” was nearing the gates of the ancient city, and, even under a meridian sun, probably spurring on his jaded steed, as if in eager haste to bring the Christians, whom he found there, bound to Jerusalem, when suddenly there flashed upon him a light from Heaven, above the brightness of that noon-day sun, at the sight of which he and those who were with him fell prostrate on the ground.

Then a voice, strange and unearthly, audible to all of them, but articulate only to him, called him by name, and said—"Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." Palpitating with terror, Saul then eagerly cried, "Who art thou, Lord?" when the prompt and more startling reply came back, "I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest."

This announcement burst upon the persecutor with resistless power and self-evidencing light. Jesus stood revealed before him in his glorified humanity and divine majesty. He beheld the despised Nazarene, whom he persecuted, to be both Lord and Christ, "the very Christ."

And instantly and spontaneously the question rose to his lips—"What shall I do, Lord?"

In the ninth chapter of the *Acts of the Apostles*, where the narrative is first given, Saul, trembling and astonished, is made to ask, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" But this clause, with which we have all grown so familiar, is said to be an interpolation of Erasmus, not being found in the most ancient MSS., and is now omitted in the Revised Version. Substantially, however, the question is the same with the one before us, as it had evidently been borrowed from it—"What shall I do, Lord?"

Now this question, short and simple as it is, marks an era in the history of Saul. It is unquestionably the turning-point, the pivot of his whole life. It

indicates the first step in that momentous change which revolutionised his whole character, and transformed the ruthless persecutor into a meek disciple and magnanimous apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, presenting the Church and the world with one of the noblest heroes that ever adorned the annals of history, or compelled the admiration of mankind.

As we love to linger by the bubbling fountain or rippling streamlet that marks the source, or to gaze on the watershed that determines the course of a mighty river, so we might well stand still and contemplate with wonder the sudden illapse and mysterious operation of that sovereign grace which thus apprehended the blood-thirsty persecutor in the very height of his frenzy, and constrained him, despite of those firmly compressed lips, to utter the simple and child-like cry—“What shall I do, Lord?”

The generally received opinion is, that these words marked the actual and instant conversion of Saul, and that they were the first outcome of his new life, his first articulated cry as a new creature in Christ Jesus.

But there is good ground also for the other opinion, that they were the cry rather of a convinced and awakened sinner, than of a converted soul. We know that after the Lord met with Saul by the way, so dazzled and even blinded was he with the glory of the vision, that he had to be led by the hand to Damascus, and there spent three anxious days and nights without sight, and did neither eat nor drink. And not impro-

bably during that time, he passed through part at least of that remarkable experience, which he details in the seventh chapter of the epistle to the Romans, and in which he tells us, "I was alive without the law once, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died." Possibly, during those three never-to-be-forgotten days and nights, the Lord was dealing with his heart and conscience, charging home upon him the spiritual requirements of his law, showing him how immeasurably short he had come, how futile were all his efforts to justify himself, and so shutting him up to Christ, as "the end of the law for righteousness," that so he "might be justified by faith."

And it is not inconsistent with this view of the matter to regard Ananias, who was divinely commissioned to wait on him, as the human instrument of his conversion. As he said to him, when he came, "Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared to thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost." And "immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales, and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptised." And who can tell but the unscaling of his bodily eyes was the signal of the opening of the eyes of his heart to behold "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ?"

But whether the conversion of Saul is to be dated from the one point, or the other which has just been

indicated, it was none the less sudden in either case when it did take place. Whether the preparatory work was longer or shorter, the change itself must have been instantaneous. The line separating the kingdom of darkness from the kingdom of light, and dividing between spiritual death and life, must, in every case of conversion, be crossed at some particular moment; and whether the convert himself may be conscious of it or not, it is necessarily known to God, and forms an era, the most memorable, in the history of the individual soul.

But in our ignorance of the exact crisis of Saul's conversion, we may justly regard the question before us—"What shall I do, Lord?" in either of the following aspects, as the cry of an awakened sinner, or as the cry of a saved sinner.

(L)

*Every awakened sinner may well adopt the cry—
“What shall I do, Lord?”*

This was substantially the cry of the thousands who were awakened at Pentecost, when, with irrepressible anxiety, they exclaimed, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" To the same effect was the piercing cry of the conscience-stricken jailer at Philippi—"Sirs; what must I do to be saved?" and, as we have just seen, this very cry burst from the lips of Saul, when,

meeting the Lord by the way, he first became truly conscious of his guilt.

That Saul had previous convictions of sin we cannot doubt. The familiar proverb which, like a swift-winged arrow, was pointed at him, implied as much—"It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." His conscience had been pricking him, even when he was persecuting the saints. Since the day (and it was not long before his journey to Damascus), when, in all the ardour of a youthful zealot, he stood by and witnessed the martyrdom of Stephen, and even consented to his death, the sight of that angelic face, and the thrilling echoes of the martyr's dying prayers, pleading for forgiveness to his murderers, may have haunted him like a spectre of the night. And most probably the very bitterness and rancour of his persecuting spirit were the outcome, as they often are, of an uneasy conscience, and an attempt—in his case, how fruitless!—to quash its accusing and unwelcome voice.

Now brought face to face with that Jesus whom he persecuted, and so face to face with his own guiltiness and sin, his alarmed conscience extorted the cry, "What shall I do, Lord?" and this is the instinctive cry of every awakened sinner.

The means by which the sinner is first aroused are not unlike those employed in the case of Saul. Natural conscience may often have been previously at work, called and quickened into exercise, it may be, by the providence of God. No one, especially if religiously educated, can long pursue a course of sin

without smarting under the remonstrances and rebukes of conscience. Yet, heedless of these checks, the sinner may still go on in his trespasses. Like the ox, when urged by the goad, he kicks against the pricks; and yet, perverse and headstrong, he holds on his way.

But it is not the voice of natural conscience alone that calls to the sinner. The Spirit of God, too, pleads with him, and commonly through that inward monitor. By the revelation and application of the divine word, he enlightens the conscience and sets it on edge. He flashes conviction on the mind. "He reproves the world of sin." He convicts and convinces of sin. He shows *that* to be sin, yea the greatest of all sins, which the sinner never accused himself of before. He shows him guilty above all, in the sight of God, of sin, because he believes not on Jesus. He confronts the sinner with a sight of the Saviour. And when thus they are, as it were, brought face to face, the sinner is made to hear the startling announcement, "I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest"—I am Jesus your brother, whom ye sold and slew.

"I saw one hanging on a tree,
In agonies and blood,
Who fixed his languid eyes on me,
As near his cross I stood.

Sure never till my latest breath,
Can I forget that look;
It seemed to charge me with his death,
Though not a word he spoke.

My conscience felt and owned the guilt,
And plunged me in despair,
I saw my sins his blood had spilt,
And helped to nail him there.

Alas! I knew not what I did,
And now my tears are vain;
Where shall my trembling soul be hid?
For I the Lord have slain."

The awakened sinner sees his sins to have been all directed against the Saviour—to have even been a crucifying of the Lord of Glory. And this fills him with alarm. His former wilful blindness in not recognising his claims, and his wicked unbelief in rejecting them, pierce him to the very heart; and with the vision of his crucified Lord before his eyes, he breaks forth with the agonising cry—"What shall I do, Lord?"

Yet some would tell us that no unconverted sinner should pray. But sooner try to smother the pent up, bursting flame, or up-gushing fountain, than to repress the struggling cry of the anxious and awakened soul. It will, it must be out. And we should not be finical or captious about the form it may at first assume. Some would sit in judgment on the jailer's earnest and impassioned cry—"What must I do to be saved?" as if it savoured somewhat of a legal spirit. Perhaps it did; but it sounds rather as the cry of one that realised his imminent danger, and was simply bent on knowing how, if by any means, he could be saved.

At this stage there is need of the utmost caution in

counselling the awakened sinner. He has arrived at a most critical point in his spiritual history, and the utmost danger might result from any ill-timed or injudicious advice.

In all probability, the awakened sinner, while crying for help, betakes himself to a more earnest and diligent study of his Bible. While thus engaged, the law of God, in all its spirituality and breadth, rises before him with its righteous claims and inflexible demands. His manifold shortcomings and mighty transgressions stare him in the face. He stands guilty and condemned. What can he do? He promises amendment. He resolves on reformation. He determines and he tries to live a better life. But, alas! his repeated failures and abounding sins crush him down to a deeper dejection, and almost drive him to despair. "What shall I do, Lord?" is his reiterated cry.

Well might we say in such a case, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." The sinner had better be sent straight to the Saviour. He only who wounds can heal. This, indeed, was the special mission on which Jesus came. "He was sent to heal the broken-hearted." He was and is the great Healer. "He sent his word and healed them."

All that we can do is to reproduce his words, whether spoken by himself, or through the mouth of his servants, and to pray for his Divine Spirit to apply them.

In answer to the question put by the Jews—"What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?"

our Lord expressly replied—"This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." And so also his servant Paul, who had doubtless learned from the solution given to his own question, "What shall I do, Lord?" said, in reply to the earnest inquiry of the jailer, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

And no other answer can be given now, and no other is needed, in order to show unto the anxious sinner the way of life and peace.

All we can do is to point the perishing sinner to the precious Saviour, to bid him look away from himself and his sins, and to "behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world," to let go all trust in his own righteousness, and to receive as a free gift the law-magnifying and soul-justifying righteousness of Christ. What is faith but a personal trust in a personal Redeemer? "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." Not merely believe this or that *about* him—not merely believe *in* him, in his existence, in his attributes, in his ability to save, but believe *on* him, venture your soul *upon* him, and see if he won't save you. As one says—A man may believe in the strength of a rope that is lying coiled up in his bedchamber, but that is a very different thing from actually trusting himself to it, and letting himself down by it, in the event of the house being wrapped in flames. So it is not enough that I believe that Jesus Christ is a Saviour, that he

has saved others, or even that he is able and willing to save me; but I must take him and trust him, I must receive him and rely on him and rest in him, as my own personal Saviour, else he cannot be mine.

Some might tell you, "Only believe that you are saved, and so you are," but that is a piece of spiritual quackery. Others might tell you, "Only believe that your sins are forgiven you, and they are forgiven," but that is not a whit better. That will no more secure the remission of your sins, than believing that your debts are paid will clear off all scores with an old creditor.

But suppose now that you were lying, as a poor penniless bankrupt, in the debtor's cell, without any hope of release till your debt was all paid, and a rich friend whom you had deeply injured, but who loved you notwithstanding, and whose word was better than any bond, should enter your cell and say to you, "Look to me, trust me, and I'll be surety for you, I'll answer for your debt;" then, if you did trust him and take him as your surety, from that moment the debt is as good as cancelled, the load is off your mind, and you are at rest.

Thus it is substantially with the sinner and the Saviour. Jesus Christ is the sinner's substitute and surety. He obeyed, suffered, and died in the room of the guilty. "He fulfilled all righteousness." He satisfied all the law's claims. "He bare our sins in his own body on the tree." He endured God's wrath on account of

them. He became a "curse for us." He gave "his life a ransom for many." And now while we are lying under a sentence of condemnation, because of our heavy sin-debt, and have nothing to pay, he comes to our prison-door, and though we have deeply offended him, yet freely offers himself as our substitute and surety; and if we take him and trust him as such, if we accept the punishment of our iniquity as borne by him, then his payment is accepted for us, our sins are remitted, our sin-debt is discharged, our prison-door is thrown open, and we go free. And not this only, but in virtue of his perfect and meritorious obedience, we walk forth as righteous men, clad with the garments of salvation, invested with all the rights and privileges of sonship, and wearing the broad seal of heaven's acceptance and approval.

Such is the present salvation which flows to us through a simple trust in Christ. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Yea, thou art saved. Saved! not by trusting that you are so, not by trusting that your sins are forgiven you, but by trusting in Christ, as having by his perfect obedience and precious blood-shedding, purchased pardon and eternal life for you. Believing on Christ, you are freely forgiven—you are forgiven at once—you are accepted at once—you are saved at once and for ever.

"By grace are ye saved, through faith." Not by feeling! Many err, and fatally err in thinking that they must feel something within, some inward impulse or

violent emotion, before they are warranted to believe. Hence they try to work up their feelings to what they imagine the proper pitch. They think they don't repent enough, or that they are not holy enough. Oh, they say, if only we felt our sins more, and could realise things more, we might have some hope. That is to say, they would trust to their feelings to recommend them to Christ. They would bring their feelings with them as a price, wherewith to propitiate his favour, or merit his salvation. But, poor sinners, instead of being saved *for* your feelings, you have need to be saved *from* them. You are putting feeling in the room of faith—yea, in the room of Christ. You think to feel aright before coming to him. Whereas all right feeling springs from a simple faith in him. You need not think to force such feeling by any mental effort. But it will flow naturally and spontaneously, on your simply trusting in Christ. “Be not afraid—only believe.”

Works, whether in the shape of feeling or doing, can have no place in the justification of the sinner. If trusted to at all as a ground of acceptance, they become “a deadly thing.” As with the voice of a trumpet, exceeding loud, out of the midst of the lightnings and thunders of Sinai, may we hear it proclaimed that “By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified,” for “cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them.”

The law of God knows no mercy. It shows no pity. It never relents. It is inexorable, inflexible, immutable. It tolerates no excuses. It makes no allowances. It never lets down its demands, nor abates one iota of its penalty. It goes right on, crashing down whatever comes in its way. It heeds no cries nor tears. It has all the fixity and force of natural law. If you thrust your hand into the fire, it is burned. If you are pitched overboard into the sea, despite of all your agonizing cries, you are drowned. The remorseless waves leap over you, and with a momentary gurgle swallow you up. And so the law of God shows no leniency to the offender. It never forgives. It never forgets. It cannot be bribed. It will never take the will for the deed. It will never compound with the sinner. It will never consent to take a shilling, no, nor even nineteen shillings in the pound. It exacts, and will not let the sinner go, until he has paid the uttermost farthing.

Now all this should show the utter hopelessness of any sinner being ever able to meet the demands of a broken law, or merit salvation by his own works. It should also mightily enhance to us the exceeding preciousness of Christ, "who is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." What no sinner could ever do for himself, Christ has done for him. "And to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness."

Such is the gospel method of salvation, removing every ground of boasting from the sinner, and making him an eternal debtor to free and sovereign grace alone.

Well, but if this be so, what becomes, it may be asked, of the interests of morality? If you tell a sinner that he is justified before God, altogether independently of his own works, do you not thereby place morality at a discount, and help to breed a laxity in life and morals among unconverted men?

Heavy charges have been brought against the evangelical system on this very score. It has been sneeringly represented as an Antinomian system, as entirely subverting the place of works, and weakening, if not destroying, the obligations of morality.

Such charges, however, have been trumpeted by those who evidently did not comprehend the gospel scheme. They have viewed it merely from their own standpoint. Like the man who pertinaciously insisted that a certain shield he had seen was all made of bronze, whereas it was found he had inspected but one side, the other being all of gold, these cavillers have run off upon a one-sided issue; and because it was maintained that there was no place for works in the justification of the sinner, they at once leaped to the conclusion that there was no place left for works at all in the evangelical system.

Yet it must be admitted that some of the defenders of that system have unwittingly given a handle to those who have caricatured and derided it.

Some, in their anxiety to prove that works, when trusted to as a ground of merit, or acceptance with God, are a deadly thing, have spoken in such a way as to bring the very name of "works" into evil odour, and to leave the impression that it did not signify much how a man lived, previous to his coming to Christ, and to lend some countenance to those who led an immoral life, and who consoled themselves by thinking, that to whatever lengths they might go in sin, the grace of God would make amends for all, and be all the more magnified, if only they were saved at last.

At all events, the place of morality, previous to conversion, has not been vindicated and asserted, as it might, and ought to have been, on the evangelical side. And hence the calumnies so freely circulated, to the effect that the gospel is an enemy to morality.

Now, is it not the fact that, while works have no place whatever in the justification of the sinner, they yet have a place, and an important place, *before* as well as *after* conversion?

Is it not in perfect keeping with the spirit of the gospel, while urging on sinners the immediate duties of faith and repentance, to exhort them to remove every stumbling-block out of the way, to take the stone from the mouth of the grave, to frame their doings to return to the Lord, to cultivate honesty, integrity, sobriety, industry, diligence, not as if, by doing these things, they could recommend themselves to God, but because,

by neglecting them or indulging in the opposite vices, they were erecting a sure barrier in the way of their repentance and return to God.

It may, doubtless, with truth be affirmed, that some men are nearer the kingdom of God than others. Our Lord himself said as much, when to the scribe, that answered him discreetly, he replied—"Thou art not far from the kingdom of God." It is true that the virtuous and the vicious, as alike "the children of wrath by nature," are both equally lost—they are equally unable to save themselves—they both alike need regeneration by the Spirit—they must be born again 'before they can enter the kingdom of God. But the one stands nearer the kingdom than the other. Outside, yet nearer! Those who are trained in Christian knowledge, who are temperate, truthful, candid, chaste, pure, surely occupy a far more hopeful vantage-ground for becoming the subjects of divine grace, than those who are leading a vicious, dissolute, or deceitful life; and, when baptised with the Spirit, are likely to present a far higher type of Christianity. Such, at least, is their hopeful attitude, if they do not trust to these virtues and rest in them, as a happy goal and a ground of merit before God. In which case, even the publicans and the harlots may go into the kingdom of God before them. The self-righteous sinner is hard to bring in. Self-righteousness is like a coat of mail, from which the barbed arrows of truth rebound only too easily.

If the position we have been seeking to establish were not a sound one, what is the use of Sabbath schools, of churches, of temperance societies? If ignorance and knowledge, if virtue and vice, are alike, why instruct the ignorant and seek to reclaim the drunkard? Is not the sober man in a more favourable position for being converted than the drunkard, and the person who is instructed in Christian knowledge more likely to be brought under the power of the truth, than one destitute of such knowledge? Are we not told, that "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God?"

Some of the earliest converts to Christianity were among the virtuous, the moral, the truth-seeking, the Bible-taught—such as Simeon and Anna, and the disciples of John, and Cornelius, and Lydia, and Timothy, and many more. As Abraham's servant said of himself, so it might be said of these—"I being in the way, the Lord led me." Far more likely is the Lord to meet with those who are in the way, treading in the paths of morality and virtue, and truly seeking his face, than with those who, turning their backs upon him, are still riding on in proud and defiant rebellion against him.

It has appeared necessary to say this much in vindication of the evangelical system, in order to wipe off the foul stigma that many would affix to it, as if, previous to conversion, it placed a moral and immoral life on much the same level, as if virtue were little

more commendable than vice, and as if it made little or no difference how a man lived, aye and until he believed the gospel.

But in wiping off this stigma, let no one think to lay a flattering unction to his own heart, as if, by the mere practice of morality, he was acquiring any worthiness before God, and by this groove would at length glide into the kingdom of God, and meanwhile might keep himself perfectly easy, and hold himself perfectly excusable in his delay to repent and believe the gospel. Welcome, indeed, are any signs of reformation in the character and life, but they afford no warrant and no excuse for delay in trusting God's word, and in opening the heart to receive the freely-proffered, but priceless gift of his Son, and the gift of eternal life through him.

Unless and until we believe in the name of the Son of God, our lives on earth, however virtuous they may be, are radically defective, and will certainly collapse at death, and leave nothing behind but a moral wreck and ruin, that will fill us with everlasting shame and remorse. We read of the house that was built on the sand, however imposing it may have looked, that it fell, and great was the fall thereof! The higher the elevation, the greater the crash. Your amiable and virtuous characters that build their morality on self-esteem, honour, conscience, or anything rather than Christ, will sustain a grievous and irreparable fall, all the greater because of their former virtues; like a noble

temple that has crumbled to ruins, and over which the stones of emptiness and the lines of confusion are stretched for ever.

Cease, then, from thine own works, O sinner, and “only believe.” For “this is the work of God, that ye believe in him whom he hath sent.” This is the noblest work, to cease from all self-righteous trust in thine own works, and believe on Christ, and rely for acceptance on his finished work alone. This “is more than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices.” When a poor sinner, letting go his hold of everything else, despairing of salvation from every other quarter, throws himself, like a shipwrecked mariner, upon Christ, and is willing to venture all on him, and for him, whether for time or eternity, that is an act of all others the most honouring to Christ, and well-pleasing to God—more grateful far and

“ More fragrant than Arabia sacrificed,
And all her spicy mountains in a flame.”



II.

WORK EAGERLY SOUGHT.

(Continuation.)

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“What shall I do, Lord?”

Acts xxii. 10.  
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“Take my life, and let it be
Consecrated all to thee:

Take my heart, it is thine own,
It shall be thy royal throne:

Take my love, my Lord, I pour
At thy feet its treasured store;

Take myself, and I will be
Ever only, Lord, for thee.”

F. R. H.

N the preceding chapter, the above question was viewed as the cry of an awakened sinner. Supposing, however, that cry has been heard and answered, and the problem of the soul's salvation has been satisfactorily settled, then we may pursue the subject in the other line, already indicated and laid down as follows:—

(II.)

The question, "What shall I do, Lord?" may be regarded as the cry of a saved sinner.

If Saul, when he put the question, was now a converted man, this was the natural and proper outcome of the new life. Spiritual life must find expression and exercise.

One of the first and finest instincts of the new-born soul is to ask—"What shall I do" for him who has done so much for me? An overflowing sense of gratitude and love, like Jordan overflowing his banks, now rises and fills every channel, and impels the saved one to seek to work for Jesus.

There is all the difference in the world between asking—"What shall I do, in order to save myself?" and, "What shall I do, now that I myself am saved?" In the former case, we may try to work and win; in the other, we win, or rather are won, and so work. The former is what the self-righteous do or strive to do, although it is an inconceivably vain attempt. The latter is what every Christian does, or ought to do. So far from being done with work, after we have come to Christ, it is then only that our proper life-work begins.

We have already seen a place for works, and sphere for morality, before conversion—not indeed in a way of recommending the sinner to Christ, but in the way of removing obstacles that hinder his coming to him.

To say that the evangelical system makes no account of how men live before they become Christians, or that it even offers a higher premium to the more reckless and profane, is a libel and a lie. So far from that, it urges immediate and thorough-going repentance, and enjoins the practice of works meet for repentance, and that by the strongest of all motives, the pleadings of love and the perils of delay. And as the gospel thus stands out as the most earnest instigator to morality, before and in order to conversion, by its repeated calls to remove all stumbling-blocks out of the way, and still more by its urgent calls to repentance, we shall now see how, by effecting that great and radical change, it promotes the purest and highest morality of any system under Heaven—a morality based on law, and prompted by love.

So far from the obligations of morality being relaxed by the gospel, they are mightily strengthened and enhanced. So far from faith and works being divorced on a sinner's believing reception of Christ, they are then so linked and wedded together that they can never be put asunder. Although standing in deadly antagonism in the matter of a sinner's justification before God, yet from that moment they mutually embrace and kiss each other. Indeed, so closely related are they to each other, that the presence of the one can be attested only by the presence of the other. If I say that I have faith, I must show it by my works. And, on the other hand, if the works I do spring not

from a principle of faith, they are not good works—nay, they are dead works. And so it is alike true, that “faith without works is dead,” and works without faith are dead also.

A living faith cannot stand alone—it cannot stand idle. It must work. “Faith worketh by love.” It first works love, and then it works by love. Love is the mainspring of the Christian life. It is the true life-power. “The love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them and rose again.”

“How long beneath the law I lay,
In bondage and distress!
I toiled the precept to obey,
But toiled without success.

Then all my servile works were done,
A righteousness to raise;
Now freely chosen in the Son,
I freely choose his ways.

What shall I do? was then my cry,
That I may worthier grow:
What shall I render to the Lord?
Is my inquiry now.

To see the law by Christ fulfilled,
And hear his pard'ning voice,
Changes a slave into a child,
And duty into choice.”

COWPER.

But while love is the grand motive power, let it not be supposed that it supersedes the need of law, or that there is any incompatibility between law and love. The hyper-spiritual idea, that the believer is above the need or power of law, is a refinement of which the gospel knows nothing, except it be to condemn it. True it is, the apostle, in writing to the Romans, says to his converts, "Ye are not under the law, but under grace." But it is clear as day that the apostle is speaking there, not of their exemption from obedience to the law as a rule of life, but of their deliverance from the bondage under which they were held, so long as they were under the law as a covenant of works. The contrariety of grace to the law, is simply a contrariety to legalism, that is, an attempt to purchase salvation by keeping the law, but not to obedience to law on the part of those who have been saved by grace. For, in that self-same chapter where the apostle says, "Ye are not under the law, but under grace," he tells his converts that, by the very law of grace, they had become "the servants of righteousness."

And to the same effect he says, speaking of himself, "Being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ." And in another place—"For I delight in the law of God, after the inward man." And yet again—"With my mind I serve the law of God."

There is much point and truth in these well-timed words of Cuyler. "It is not only in awaking sinners that God's law plays a vital part. It is equally vital

as an element in healthy, vigorous, useful, well-developed piety. Sweet and devout emotions are very pleasant in their place. But Christianity is a great deal more than a rapture. It does not begin or end in a song or a sacrament. It is a *living loyalty* to God. Holiness really signifies a willing submission to God, a constant obedience to him. Christ cannot be sincerely loved except by the disciple who keeps his laws."

With some, however, the very mention of law seems to suggest something legal or mercenary, and to carry with it the idea of bondage or constraint. But they forget that, with God's children, it is love that is the all-constraining power, and that makes their duty their delight. Are not both of these combined in what we call a *dutiful* child? It has indeed been objected that for a loving child to speak of doing its duty to its parents sounds cold and harsh. But call it by what name you please, is it not the very thing that every such child ought to do and will do? Loving its parents, won't it desire to know, and knowing, delight to fulfil their wishes and commands? It has no greater joy than to be told something to do, to go some message, or run some errand.

But what wise parent is there who, counting on the love of his children, would break down "the law of the house," and cease to exercise his authority over them, especially when he remembers the freaks of childhood, and the fickleness of filial love? Was not Abraham commended, because he would *command* his children

after him? And do we not find the apostle, in writing to the Ephesians, counselling filial obedience on the very score of rightful duty and command?—"Children, obey your parents in the Lord; for this is **RIGHT**."

Now, transfer all this to the case of God's children. Because they love him, are they therefore to be freed from the authority of law, and the behests of duty? Nay rather, is it not in their obedience to law, and their discharge of duty, that their love is to find its highest exercise, and to furnish its most approving test? "For this," says the beloved apostle, "is the love of God, that we keep his commandments, and his commandments are not grievous." Love requires some groove or channel in which to run, else it would soon run to waste.

It has been asserted, by way of showing the power and pre-eminence of love, that "love outruns law and leaves it far behind." But this cannot be, this ought not to be. Will any one maintain that his love can or ought to go beyond the limit of commanded duty? Take the duty of loving one another. "A new commandment," said our Lord, "I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye love one another." Will any one say that his love can or ought to go beyond that? Hear what the Master himself says—"So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all these things which are commanded you, say we are unprofitable servants, we have done that which was our duty to do."

Our love ought ever to be a *duteous* love. It ought ever to run along the line of law and duty. It needs not only impulsion but direction. Hence the instinctive cry of the loving heart, "What shall I do, Lord?"

Now to that cry the whole of God's revealed will is the response, whether revealed in providence or Scripture. And what is God's will but his law? And what is the obligation of law, but DUTY?

Strange that that word should have got into such bad repute with some! If it is not a word that occurs often in Scripture, its substance and essence meet us in every other page. Are not the constraints of grace, the claims of love, and the calls of duty, one and the same? How well was this understood and put by the late Professor George Wilson, in those few but telling words!—"I try to live as a dying man (which I am), with faith in a living Saviour, whose finished work leaves me nothing to do in the way of meritorious labour, though it lays on me the greatest obligation to work for him and to do his will." And thus we are prepared for what we find him saying at another time, "The word DUTY seems the biggest word in the world, and is uppermost in my serious doings." George Moore, the great Christian merchant and philanthropist, says in his Diary—"If I have one thing, it is an imperative sense of duty."

That word has had a kind of magic power over the consciences and lives of men, and has played a mighty part in the kingdoms of this world. Eloquently and

truly has the Right Hon. William Gladstone said—"I submit that Duty is a power which rises with us in the morning, and goes to rest with us at night. It is co-extensive with the action of our intelligence. It is the shadow that cleaves to us, go where we will, and which only leaves us when we leave the light of life."

Devotion to duty has been the secret spring of magnanimous patriotism and martial prowess. To what feats of valour, to what deeds of daring, has it given birth! It was, doubtless, the key to the characters and lives of such intrepid heroes as Nelson and Wellington. And the key-note of their lives has been re-echoed all the world over—"England expects every man to do his duty." And in manifold instances has their indomitable courage been re-duplicated in the events and annals of British history.

" Not once nor twice in our rough island story,
The path of Duty was the way to glory."

TENNYSON.

Once and again have we heard of British seamen, standing on the decks of their burning or sinking vessels, and, sternly faithful to their duty, abiding at their post until they had seen others rescued from impending destruction, and then suddenly swept down into the awful "majesty of darkness," sinking to rise no more.

And if a sense of duty, mostly inspired by natural conscience, has achieved such heroic exploits, what may it not be expected to do, when prompted by a

true Christian conscientiousness, and propelled by a burning Christian love and zeal? Indeed, we know what it has done. As one has so forcibly expressed it, "There have been men, like John the Baptist, who could speak the truth which had made their own spirits free, with the axe above their neck. There have been men redeemed in their inmost being by Christ, on whom tyrants and mobs have done their worst, and when, like Stephen, the stones crashed in upon their brain, or when their flesh hissed and crackled in the flames, were calmly superior to it all."

It is high time that that word *Duty* should be lifted up from the world's platform, and consecrated to its highest and noblest use. It were, after all, but a poor thing for me to say, as alas! many have said in a spirit of self-gratulation and pride, "I have done my duty," while yet ignoring that very thing which lies at the foundation of all acceptable service and all true greatness, and without which the most heroic lives will crumble to pieces—viz., a simple faith and supreme love towards the Lord Jesus Christ. Then, indeed, is Duty a power, when baptised with the spirit of the gospel, which is essentially a spirit of self-renouncing and self-sacrificing love.

That is the true spirit of martyrdom. Yet not to martyrs alone should that spirit belong; but to every true witness and faithful follower of Christ. It is the very spirit that is breathed forth by every ransomed sinner in the cry, "What shall I do, Lord?"

There is a deeper meaning embodied in that cry than might at first appear.

It involves *a personal surrender of ourselves to the Lord*. Calling him "Lord," we acknowledge his sovereignty over us, and our entire submission to him. We resign our hearts, our wills, our consciences, our affections, our whole spirit and soul and body to his authority and control. We say in so many words,—

"Take my life, and let it be
Ever, only, all for thee."

He alone has the right to dispose of us. To him alone it belongs to prescribe our work, and to shape our destiny. We have no right to dictate to him. We have no right to choose for ourselves.

So when we go asking direction from him, let us beware of going with a foregone conclusion. It is surely downright mockery to ask him, in any doubtful matter, "What shall I do?" when we had previously made up our minds. Let us not merely ask him to forward our plans, but to furnish them, and then to bless them. Let us, every morning, take a *carte blanche* to him, and ask him to fill it up. Let us not merely have recourse to him in our extremities, but in all our ways acknowledge him; and then he has promised to direct our paths. Even "the steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord." The good works in which believers walk are before ordained of God. How safe, then, to plant our steps, when the

Lord has ordained and ordered the way! How sweet to take up our work when the Lord has planned it!

But, again, let us remember that in asking the question, "What shall I do, Lord?" we are owning *our personal responsibility*. We do not ask, "Lord, and what shall this man do?" but, "What shall *I* do?" We have no right to be inquisitive about other men's affairs and prospects. We should attend to our own business. When Peter was anxious to know the fate of his fellow-disciple John, the Master said to him, "What is that to thee? Follow thou me."

Many people trouble themselves about curious and speculative questions that have really no bearing on the great business of life. We have no right to pry into the divine counsels. We may not see how the work allotted to us to do will fit in with the work allotted to others. But with this we have really nothing to do. The Lord will, doubtless, piece in all the separate parts done by his servants into a beautiful mosaic at last—a perfect, finished, and magnificent whole.

" Set each stone by thy master-hand of grace,
Form the mosaic as thou wilt for me,
And in thy temple-pavement give it place."

Meanwhile, our duty is to know our part, and to do it. "Every man shall bear his own burden." The burden of responsibility every one must bear for himself alone. It is intransferable. Guilt may be transferred to an-

other—blessed be God!—else, what would become of any of us? We may lay our sins on Jesus. But our responsibility cannot be shifted to another. It cannot be divided—it cannot be shared—it must be borne. But the very pressure of it may send us the oftener to him who alone can help us to bear it.

But, once more, the question, “What shall I do, Lord?” is the expression of *personal obligation*. It is the question of one who feels that he owes a heavy debt of gratitude and love, and is anxious to know how best to discharge it. Like the emancipated slave, who clung to his liberator, and vowed to serve him, exclaiming, “He redeemed me! he redeemed me!” so the saved sinner is ready to cry, “O Lord, truly I am thy servant; I am thy servant, and the son of thine hand-maid; thou hast loosed my bonds!” And then, not only with the gushing gratitude of a manumitted home-born slave, but with a deep personal feeling of obligation and love to his new Lord and Master, he spontaneously asks—“What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits to me?” He does not ask, What *must* I do? But, What *shall* I do? What *may* I do? What *can* I do?

In the flush and fervour of his first love, the young convert is eager to find some work to do, whereby to testify his love to his Redeemer. Saved himself, he desires to become an instrument in saving others. He wants to be a fellow-helper to the truth. He seeks to be useful. And this desire, so far from being re-

pressed and frowned upon, as it is sometimes, by older and colder Christians, deserves by all means to be fostered and encouraged, while at the same time duly and wisely directed. Never will the Church of Christ be in a sound and prosperous condition, until every Christian, realising his personal obligation, is willing to lend himself as an earnest worker for Christ.

Well would it be if all Christians preserved more of the warmth and fervour of their first love. Yet it is quite possible that, like many a flowing river, when it is growing stiller, it may be growing deeper. But as love is subject to so many fluctuations and decays, hence the value of an unerring rule and abiding standard, such as is furnished in the word and will of God, at once to stimulate our love, and to regulate its exercise.

At no time is there more need of divine grace and guidance than at the outset of the Christian life. That need voices itself in the cry—"What shall I do, Lord?"

It is just as if the inquirer were to ask—How can I best serve my Lord? And that question again resolves itself into many others. As for example—Where does the path of duty lie? What profession or trade shall I choose? or, having chosen one already, shall I abandon it, or abide therein? Abiding in it, (which, if it is not an unlawful one, is usually the wisest course), how can I lay out my time and talents, my means and influence, to the best account? In short, the young Christian asks—What is my proper

sphere of work, and how can I make myself most useful in it?

And in order to solve such questions, whether they come up in the earlier or later stages of the Christian life, what better can we do than, first and foremost, with unbiassed wills and ingenuous minds, with child-like submission, refer them to the Master whose servants we are, and who knows how to apportion their work to each!

We may be sure that the all-wise God, our Heavenly Father, well understands how to utilise all the things and all the creatures he has formed.* God has made nothing in vain. And, if he has bought us with the precious blood of his own dear Son, and made us his children, we cannot doubt but that he has a special use for us, and may well pray each one—"What shall I do, Lord? Use me—use me."

" Make use of me, my God!
Let me not be forgot,
A broken vessel cast aside,
One whom thou needest not.

I am thy creature, Lord,
And made by hands divine;
And I am part, however mean,
Of this great world of thine.

* Among modern discoveries, Sir John Lubbock recently mentioned the striking fact that, "to the beneficent, though unconscious action of insects, and especially bees, we owe the beauty of our gardens, the sweetness of our fields, the scent, colour, and, in many cases, the form of our flowers."

Thou usest all thy works,
The weakest things that be:
Each has a service of its own,
For all things wait on thee.

Thou usest the high stars,
The tiny drops of dew,
The giant peak and little hill,
And why not use me too?

Thou usest tree and flower,
The rivers vast and small,
The eagle great, the little bird
That sings upon the wall.

Thou usest the wide sea,
The little hidden lake,
The pine upon the Alpine cliff,
The lily in the brake.

The huge rock in the vale,
The sand grain by the sea,
The thunder of the rolling cloud,
The murmur of the bee.

All things do serve thee here,
All creatures great and small;
Make use of me, my God,
The weakest of them all."

BONAR.

But while thus seeking to be made useful, and praying to be guided into our proper sphere and proper work, let us remember there are other means to be conjoined with prayer, in order to ascertain our Lord's mind and will. We must diligently study the chart of his word, and mark the leadings of his providence,

and attend to the soft whispers of his Spirit, and consult the dictates of conscience and of common-sense ; by doing which we shall not fail, sooner or later, to find out the path of duty.

Not that we are to expect visions or revelations ; not that there will be any audible voice heard to say— “This is the way, walk ye in it;” not but that at times we may have to exercise much painful watching, and even be subjected to much painful perplexity, in determining what course to take. But waiting upon the Lord in the use of these appointed means, neither running before God’s providence, nor lagging behind it, we shall in due time “*assuredly gather*” what the mind of the Lord is, and what is the way in which he would have us to go, and the work he would have us to do. “Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them; but the transgressors shall fall therein.”

As the answers to our prayers may come in many varied, perhaps hidden, ways, there is great prudence and discernment to be used in order to read them aright; as well as great promptitude and decision in carrying out what we plainly see to be the mind of the Lord. We must not seek to take the matter out of his hands, when we think we are not to get our own will and way. We must not be like petted children, who are for giving up the game with their fellows, when things seem to go against them. We must not

be like Jonah, who set sail to flee from the presence of the Lord (a long voyage surely! as one says), when a distasteful duty was laid upon him. When duty is made plain, if we shirk it, we shall surely smart for it. Submission to God's will—prompt and cheerful submission—is the surest and shortest road to the soul's peace, prosperity, and progress.

The case of Saul is a very instructive one. In answer to the question, "What shall I do, Lord?" he was told to go into Damascus, and there it would be told him what was appointed him to do. And the Lord said to Ananias, when sending him with a message to Saul there—"For I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake!" Saul asked what he must *do*, and the Lord showed him what he must *suffer*.

And thus it often happens still. We set our hearts upon doing this and doing that, to show our love to Christ; but suddenly he lays his hand upon us, breaks us off from our cherished plans and purposes, and withdraws us from the work we love. And then, perhaps, in eager surprise, we are ready to ask—"Lord, why is this?" It seems strange that at the very time we were wishing and trying to do good, and promising fields of usefulness seemed to be opening up before us, we should be thus suddenly arrested, and compelled to desist, and laid uselessly on the shelf.

Not uselessly, however,—not necessarily so—my brother. You asked what the Lord would have you

to do, and, in asking him, you virtually vowed submission to his will. But it was work, you say, you wanted. Well! and is not the Lord giving you work—difficult work, doubtless—to do, but on that account all the more glorifying to him? Is he not setting you to the work of acquiring those lovely graces—meekness, patience, submission, and the like—which can be acquired only in the school of affliction, and by this means, perhaps, preparing you for other work, it may be, much active service, much noble work, which he has planned for you in this present world; and still higher work and still nobler service in the world to come?

But whether or not, don't think that all work must cease during a time of affliction. Don't think or speak of affliction as anything like an interference with or interruption of the real work of life. It is a great mistake. It need not form even a parenthesis in the Christian life. It may form the most precious part of life—the most fruitful in great and lasting results—the most memorable to us, and the most glorifying to God.

If only we are then taught to be still, and know that the Lord he is God—if only we learn obedience by the things which we suffer—if only our wills are in any measure schooled and educated into submission to God's will, and we are enabled to show “an example of suffering affliction and of patience,” we are then certainly not idle, we are not losing time, but are learning the grandest of all lessons, and doing the most heroic work.

"Suffering is the work now sent,
Nothing can I do but lie
Suffering as the hours go by ;
All my powers to this are bent.
Suffering is my gain ; I bow
To my Heavenly Father's will,
And receive it hushed and still;
Suffering is my worship now."

GESENIUS, 1646.

Even the great Luther was constrained to exclaim, in witnessing the unmurmuring patience of a Christian friend in great physical suffering—"Who am I, a wordy preacher, compared with this great doer!"

"Wherefore, let them that suffer according to the will of God, commit the keeping of their souls to him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator."



III.

WORK SPECIALLY GIVEN.

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“To every man his work.”

MARK xiii. 34.  
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“It is the first of all problems for a man to find out what kind of work he is to do in the universe.”

CARLYLE.

HE Son of Man is compared to a great householder, who took his journey into a far country, but before leaving gave all necessary instructions to his servants and dependants for the proper management of the affairs of the household in his absence. Some had a more responsible situation than others, being entrusted with a larger share of authority. But each and all had their allotted place and work. Even the porter at the gate had his; and although his lord was gone on a far journey, still he was commanded to watch, lest his lord might return suddenly and unexpectedly, and coming thus might find him sleeping at his post.

It is easy to see the drift of this short parable. Our Lord Jesus Christ has gone up to the heavenly country: “Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things.” But as certainly as the men

of Galilee saw him go up into heaven, so certainly and in like manner will he come again.

It is only a question of time. The day and hour of his return are irrevocably fixed by an eternal decree. The chariot wheels of time, with noiseless yet resistless speed, are bearing us onward to that great day. You might as well try to arrest the sun in his glorious march through the heavens, as arrest or postpone the coming of the great and notable day of the Lord. The hands of the great clock of time are steadily moving towards the hour of doom; and at length, sooner perhaps than many will believe, its last long and solemn peal will announce that "the hour is come."

But although the hour is unalterably fixed in the book of God's decrees, it is hid from the eyes of all living. We know neither the day nor the hour of the coming of the Son of Man. As we know not at what watch of the night the thief may steal in, so we know not when the Master of the house may come, whether at even, or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning. And this is equally true of Christ's coming, whether at death or judgment.

In a moment, we may hear death's low muffled tread and unmistakable knock at the door. Creeping up the secret stairs of life, he may suddenly lay his cold icy hand on our heart, congealing the warm vital current at its very fountainhead, and stretching us as a piece of poor, pulseless, senseless clay before him.

And to every one his own death-knell will virtually

be his summons to judgment. At least, the issues of both will be substantially the same—overwhelmingly great, everlasting, unchanging!

Yet the coming of the Lord at death must not be allowed to divert our thoughts from his second advent, as if the two were merely convertible terms, and might be merged the one into the other. The Lord's second coming occupies altogether a separate place, and should exert a separate influence and sublime power. To his own people it is even presented as "that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ."

But meanwhile, so long as we are in the body, and thus await our Lord's coming, we are like servants left by the Master in charge of the house, having each and all our allotted work to do, and having, on his return, to render an account of our stewardship, how we have fulfilled our trust and done our work. There is not one of us, young or old, small or great, but has something to do for the Master; and what if he should come and find us with our work not begun, or only half done!

(L)

Every one has a special work given him to do.

Every one has his mission in the world. Every one has been sent into the world for a special end. Every one has his niche—his place—his work. The Lord is

a great householder, and employs many servants, and never engages, never hires more than he needs.

Some might think the human race was overgrown—that there were more of the race than there was use for. But there is room for all in God's great house—in God's big world. And there is need for all, if only each knew his place and did his work.

Man, you were not made, you were not meant, to be a cipher. Nor were you made to be a mere senseless machine, or useless piece of lumber in God's house. Nor were you created to be a mere ornament or toy. Rational and immortal beings were not sent into the world to serve and amuse themselves, or be the tools and toys of others. None of the Lord's servants are intended to be mere hangers-on, mere onlookers. He does not care to have any of your gentlemen-servants about him, who think it beneath them to put their own hand to the work, and who would just strut about at their ease, and order others about at their pleasure, as if they were themselves a sort of lords of creation, and all others looked very small in their eyes. Such were those of old, who laid heavy and grievous burdens on men's shoulders, but they themselves would not move them with one of their fingers.

It is true there is a great diversity of work, as there is a division of labour, among the Lord's servants. There are many members, and all have not the same office. In a great house, where there are many servants, each one has his own department, and it is only

by each doing his part, and doing it timeously and well, that the order of the house can be maintained, and the whole work properly done. So it is in the Lord's house. He has a large establishment. He has thousands and tens of thousands of servants. And yet each has his own place and province. "To every man his work."

And if each will keep to his own place and attend to his own work, there need be no collision and no confusion. Every one should feel that the credit and comfort of the house, as well as of himself, depend on his doing *his* part wisely and well—doing the right thing at the right time.

And, certainly, there should be no envy or jealousy among the Lord's servants. I may think another's place more eligible, and another's work easier than mine. My work may have a very prosaic look about it—it may seem very monotonous—very commonplace. I may think it a kind of drudgery or slavery, and may fancy that I am fit for much higher and nobler work. But who am I that I should reflect on the Master for placing me where I am? Is he not to rule in his own house, and to order and arrange his servants as best pleaseth him? Shall I grumble at the work he has evidently laid to my hand, and to which he calls me, because I see some easier and pleasanter post elsewhere, but to which he does *not* call me?

What if the smaller wheels in some great machine should refuse to turn, because they did not occupy so

prominent a place as others? What if, in the human body, the foot should say, "I won't walk, because I am not the hand," or the hand, "I won't work, because I am not the eye?" Or what if a servant in some lord's house should say, "I won't perform this menial service, because some of my fellow-servants have less work and more wage?" In any or in all of these cases, would not such a refusal bring the whole concern to a deadlock, or at least derange the working of the whole? The fact is that the smaller wheels in a machine, the less honourable members of the body, and the humbler servants in a house, are just as useful and indispensable as the others. And, if only we judged aright, we would esteem any place honourable to which the Lord called us in his house, because he is such a great Lord that any service is dignified and ennobled that is rendered out of regard to his authority, and with an eye to his glory.

The only thing that one need trouble himself about, if he is a Christian, is to know his proper place and work, so as to occupy the one, and accomplish the other. Well, the one will go far to determine the other: Where my work lies, that is my place and post, and *vice versa*.

If, then, the Master gives "to every one his work," what is *my work*, the work appointed to me to do? To that plain question let some practical answer be given. The answer, however, is not so easy as might at first appear. Of the special work that belongs to

each of us, some parts indeed may be clear and clearly defined, but other parts may have to be evolved through time and circumstances.

Of the former class, is the personal and primary duty of *working out our own salvation*. But, if we are Christians, if we are Christ's, are we not saved already? Yes, indeed, in so far as concerns our acceptance with God, the communication of a new and heavenly nature, and all needful provision for the soul's complete assimilation to the will and image of God. But we must remember that this last, forming as it does an essential part of salvation—in other words, our own personal sanctification—is a work of time, and that, towards its accomplishment, we must be fellow-workers with God. We must co-operate with the gracious working of his Spirit in our hearts. “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.” We must, so to speak, *work out*, to its proper issues, what God is pleased to *work in*.

This is the special work of every Christian—my own work—my daily, hourly work. Yet how often is it lost sight of, in the anxiety to be engaged in what is called the Lord's work, as if the cultivation of personal holiness were not a primary and indispensable part of it? With some young converts there is a temptation to attend religious meetings, where they are saved the trouble of thinking much for themselves, and to neglect such personal duties as secret prayer, the private study

of the Scriptures, and meditation thereon. Now such meetings are no doubt helpful, when they prove a spur to such duties, and are not allowed to stand as a substitute for them. But we must never forget that we are then employed about the Lord's work (and which, because given us to do, may well be called *our* work), when, by his grace helping us, we are fighting against self and sin, and striving to curb and control our unholy tempers and evil passions, to regulate our appetites and moderate our desires, to purify our thoughts, to govern our wills, to rule our spirits, to tame our tongues, to practise self-denial, patience, meekness, humility, charity ; in short, to cultivate the Christian temper, and to live the Christian life. Such is the fight of faith—the good fight—and which can be maintained only by a habitual looking unto Jesus, and continual watching unto prayer.

Every Christian should regard his own heart as the chamber which the Master of the house has left him specially in charge of ; as the plot of ground, "the garden inclosed," which he is to keep and dress, for the Master's use. And sad indeed will it be, if any of his servants have to confess—"They made me the keeper of the vineyards ; but mine own vineyard have I not kept." Are not the Master's instructions to "keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life?" If we would "hold the fort" for Jesus, it is not enough to wave back the answer—"By thy grace we will." Dependence must be conjoined with diligence,

yea with "all diligence." If prayer and vigilance are needed anywhere, they are needed here.

If any servant of Jesus Christ is tempted to think meanly of this work, let him remember how many rebel powers and passions of his soul he is called, by the aid of his kingly grace, to subdue, and thus how kingly he himself may grow, by having all these vanquished, vassal powers made to become his trained servants and retainers.

Next to this department of the Christian's work, and indeed naturally arising out of it, lies the faithful discharge of all *the personal and relative duties of life*. Let it not be thought that the cultivation of personal holiness is a thing to be attended to by itself, apart from everything else. It is quite a mistake to suppose that, in order to be holy, a man must needs follow some sacred profession, or retire from the world into some cloister or convent. It is easy to put on the garb of sanctity, but true holiness is a thing of the heart and life. And it is best acquired, by the help of God's Spirit, in the daily and diligent discharge both of our personal and relative duties. It is on the battle-field of daily life that our principles are best attested and approved. In order to walk with God, Enoch did not walk out of the world, but faithfully fulfilled the varied duties of life, and approved his lofty spirituality by maintaining his purity and integrity, uncontaminated, amid abounding corruption and sin.

A Christian mother, in the midst of her ceaseless

anxieties and cares, by day and by night, may sometimes be tempted to think that, if she were only rid of these fretting cares and family frictions, and were left free to attend to her closet duties, and the culture of her own heart, and could oftener go to religious meetings, she would attain a far higher standard of spirituality, but in thinking so she is labouring under a fond delusion. Her chief place is in the family, and her special mission and work are there. And a right noble mission it is, and a most invaluable work. Invaluable, not only for the training of the young, but for the training and education of her own spirit, through the discipline of these very cares and crosses, which are so trying to faith and patience.

And what is true of the mother's mission is more or less true of every other relation and avocation in life, with their attendant responsibilities, and duties, and cares. In order to do the Lord's work, it is not often necessary to abandon one's ordinary calling. Not, at least, if it is a lawful one, and can be carried on without sinning against conscience and scripture. Otherwise, the sooner it is abandoned the better. But in general, it is a safe rule to follow—"Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called."

In order to do the Lord's work, it is not a change of place or profession that is needed, so much as a change of spirit, in fulfilling the duties of the place or profession where we already are. We may serve the Lord, not by hastily throwing up our place and betaking

ourselves to what seems more spiritual work, but by importing a right spirit into the work already laid to our hand, by "serving in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter." The difference between spiritual and secular work lies far more in the manner and spirit in which our work is done, than in the mere matter of the work itself. With much truth and force has Carlyle said—"Man, symbol of Eternity, imprisoned into time! it is not thy works, which are mortal, infinitely little, and the greatest no greater than the least, but only *the spirit* thou workest in, that can have worth or continuance."

Paul assured even the Christian slaves at Colosse that, by obeying their masters according to the flesh, and doing what they did, heartily, as to the Lord, and not to men, they were serving the Lord Christ. And if, in their enslavement, *they* found a sphere wherein to serve the Lord, who shall plead the circumstances of his lot as an exemption from such service? A servant of men may yet be a servant, yea a freeman of the Lord Jesus Christ. Even although the body were in bonds, the soul may be gloriously and divinely free. The humblest service, if done for Jesus' name's sake, becomes an act of worship, and even an oblation of praise.

This, then, is the spirit we must carry into our several spheres of duty. And if only our work is impregnated with this spirit, it is, to all intents and purposes, the Lord's work. That work lies at our very

door. It is to be found in the nursery, in the kitchen, in the parlour, in the school, in the shop, in the office, in the bothy, in the field, in the market, and in the exchange.

"My own work," is to be faithful to my own duty, "faithful in that which is least, as well as in that which is much," doing all with a simple regard to the will of my Lord and Master, and a supreme desire and habitual intention to please him in everything.

Are you a child? Then your special work is, to be dutiful and obedient to your parents; gentle, forbearing and loving to your brothers and sisters; respectful to your teachers, attentive to your lessons, helpful, obliging, and polite to all.

Are you a head of a family? Your special work at home is, the practice of all domestic virtues, such as conjugal fidelity, tender sympathy and affection; proper Christian training of your children; kind and careful supervision of servants; maintenance of family worship; and due, prudent and economical ordering of all the affairs of the household.

Are you a servant? Your special work is, attention to orders, thoroughness in executing them, anxiety to please, studied cleanliness and punctuality, good temper and good breeding, unimpeachable honesty and truthfulness and chastity.

Are you a man of business? Your special work is, the diligent prosecution of your lawful calling; the avoidance of all rash speculations; unbending ad-

herence, despite of the low and lax standard of commercial morality, to the principles of truth and justice and honour; the habitual exercise of Christian conscientiousness, courtesy, and generosity; in short, doing business for the Lord, and "enduring as seeing him who is invisible."

Are you a student or man of letters? Then your work lies in ardently pursuing your studies, whether for your own benefit or the instruction of others, and in trying to elaborate results for the enlightenment and advancement of society; while at the same time resisting the ensnaring influence of study, and the temptation to make it the chief end of life, instead of the means to an end, that end being the glory of God, in your effort to promote your own self-culture and the good of others;

"Till, blending with the broad bright stream of sanctified endeavour,
God's glory be its ocean home, the end it seeketh ever."

Are you a working man? Then your life-motto should be—"Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord." Your aim should be to produce the best workmanship; as John Newton remarked in his own homely way, that a Christian, if a shoemaker, should strive to be the best shoemaker in all the village. Moreover, economy of your master's time as of your own, uniform sobriety, contentment with your lot, frugality in your mode of

living, and the fear of God dominating over all, are among the specialties of your daily work. The name you bear of a working man is an honourable one. It was literally true of Christ, the model mechanic, and should hold good, more or less, of every Christian.

These are merely a few examples, and might be indefinitely extended. But is there no special work, it may be asked, to which we are called, outside the sphere of our ordinary relations and avocations, beyond the discharge of the different personal and relative duties of life? Doubtless there is, although the nature of such work, and the opportunities for its performance, fall more to be determined by the unfoldings of providence, and by our individual gifts and graces.

Every Christian, while sacredly bound to secure the temporal and spiritual welfare of himself and his family, first and foremost, diligently to pursue his lawful calling, and to rule his own house well, duly to culture and enrich his own mind by the acquisition of all useful knowledge, and carefully to attend to his own bodily health, by taking all needful recreation and rest, yet ought to lay himself out to do all the good he can to others, in relieving the suffering, in helping the needy, in succouring the oppressed, in instructing the ignorant, in consoling the afflicted, in recovering the lapsed, in saving the lost, in confirming the saved, and, in short, in upholding and extending the Redeemer's kingdom at home and abroad. Opportunities for doing such work will not be wanting to those who are

on the outlook for them, and are ready to seize and improve them. Not only as members of families, but of Christian churches, and of the community, we shall find many open doors, many ways both of getting and of doing good, as by prayer, by private intercourse, by personal visits, by the pen, through the press, and by the living voice, by tract and book distribution, by becoming a collector, a teacher or an office-bearer in the Church of Christ, by Christian liberality, by philanthropic, missionary or evangelistic efforts, by the exercise and the advocacy of temperance, by an enlightened patriotism, by brotherly sympathy, by kind looks and words and deeds, by faithful yet friendly admonition, and above all, by the winsome example and unconscious influence of a humble, holy and consistent life. Such a life, it has been said, might be called a fifth gospel.

It was the testimony of the late and much beloved Angell James, when dying—"Usefulness is within the reach of us all. The man who intensely desires to be useful, and takes the proper means, will be useful." No one need be idle. The Lord has need of you. The Church has need of you. The world has need of you. Don't say, "No man hath hired us." The Master bids you—"Go work to-day in my vineyard."

Let no one reply—"But I am merely a unit—I am only a single person—I am a solitary maiden—I am a lonely widow; of what use can I be?" Remember it is by units the Lord has wrought the mightiest results.

Surely if you are constrained by the love of Christ, you will find expression for it in one or more of the channels pointed out. Think of the holy women whose names are recorded in Scripture. Study the XVI. chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, where you will find some of the humblest names enrolled among the aristocracy of heaven. Try to emulate "the beloved Persis, who laboured much in the Lord."

Let no one say—"But I am getting old. What can I do? I fear I have outlived my usefulness." Not so. You can show the beautiful picture of a contented, thankful, peaceful, happy old age. You can give the benefit of your experience and advice to the younger. You can bear testimony to the divine faithfulness. You can abound in prayer.

It is told of John Eliot, the great apostle to the Indians, that, on his deathbed, he was found one day with a young savage at his side, to whom he was teaching his letters; and on being asked why he did not take rest, he said, "I have often prayed to God to make me useful, and now that I can no longer preach, he leaves me strength enough to teach this poor child his alphabet."

There was once an aged pilgrim, no less than 91 years of age, who gave this advice to a young friend—an advice which every Christian would do well to follow—"Do all the good you can—to all the people you can—in all the ways you can—and as long as you can."

The Lord has no superannuated servants in his house. When he keeps any of his dear servants waiting long ere he calls them away, we may be sure he has yet some work to be done in them, or by them, or both. While he will not leave the grain one day longer than it is ripe, yet he will not cut it down till then.

A rich merchant once said to a poor woman, dependent on his charity, whom he often visited, and who had been for years confined to bed by severe rheumatism, "Nancy, why does that loving Saviour, of whom you speak so often, leave you here to suffer so much, instead of taking you to be with him in glory?" "Because my work for him is not yet finished." "Your work, Nancy? What work can you do for the honour of Jesus?" "Pray for a blessing on your money, sir," replied the bed-ridden saint. And not for others only, but for ourselves, have we all need to pray on and up to the last. All the more as the end approaches. There is suggestiveness in the words—"The prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are ended."

And we have need to watch as well as pray. The mount of prayer is the best watch-tower. Old Jacob stood on that lofty mount when he said—"I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord." When we can no longer act as the Lord's *working* servants, we may yet be his *waiting* servants.

"They also serve who only stand and wait."

Indeed, as we have seen, when the Lord gave "to every man his work," he commanded the porter to watch. And immediately it is added, "Watch ye, therefore." Not the porter only, but all the servants are commanded to watch. "What I say unto you, I say unto you all, Watch."

It may be easier, in a sense, to work than to watch. Hence the need of enforcing the duty with the word of *command*. Our sluggish natures may tempt us to sleep when we should be wide awake. Even the wise virgins "slumbered and slept." But if anything should keep us awake, it is the prospect of our Lord's coming, which may be as sudden as it will be surprisingly and surpassingly glorious. "Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober." Let our working and watching be lovingly blent together. The one is the complement of the other. They act and re-act on each other. Work would be heartless without watching. And watching would be weary without work. While the hand is busy at work, let the eye be habitually directed to Christ, and be hopefully watching for his coming.

"Looking for, and hastening unto the coming of the day of God," with our marriage-dress on, with our loins girt, and our lights burning, and our vessels filled with oil, let us be ready at the first signal to hail the herald-cry, "Behold the Bridegroom cometh," and join the jubilant procession, and pass through the golden gate into the bridal hall, and sit down at "the marriage-supper of the Lamb."

(II.)

While the Lord has given "to every man his work," he has also given the requisite time and talent, and is ready, when asked, to give the requisite strength for it.

Our Lord is not a hard task-master, "reaping where he has not sown, and gathering where he has not strewed." He is ready to give for what he requires, but will certainly require for what he gives.

Whatever work has been allotted to us, we may be sure the necessary *time* has been allowed for it. The Lord would never exact work from his servants, without affording them time for it. But while sufficient time has been given for our work, it is not more than enough. There is time needed and provided for recreation and rest, but none for trifling, none for squandering, none for sloth and sin. Every day and hour have their own duties, and every duty its own time and place. And the soundest wisdom lies in doing "the work of the day in the day," in taking up each duty, as it comes up, in its own order and time.

But while there is a time and season for everything, yet if we don't grasp the opportunity, it is gone. The great thing is to strike in at the right moment. Napoleon said—"There is a crisis in every battle—a ten or fifteen minutes on which the fate of the battle depends. To gain this is victory; to lose it is defeat." So it is in our life-struggles.

" There is a tide in the affairs of men,
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune;
Omitted, all the voyage of their life
Is bound in shallows and in miseries."

Yet not only in great crises, but at all times, let us be ready for action—"aye ready." "Great events," it has been said, "often turn on little hinges." Even a throne may hang by a thread. If we let go the threads, we may entangle the skein of life. Let us then be careful of the threads. Let us gather up the fragments, that nothing be lost. Let our life-motto be—"Redeeming the time"—literally, "Redeeming the opportunity."

Many a golden opportunity has been lost through sheer inaction and delay. Perhaps there is a poor sufferer near your door, whom a friendly visit, a word of sympathy, a note of warning, a little timely help, might benefit. You intend to visit him, but you put off from day to day, till one day, when at length you call at the door, and ask how he is, you are told he is gone. Now the opportunity is lost. He will need your sympathy no more. He is beyond your counsels, and prayers, and alms.

Time is short, and life is earnest. Our life-work will need all our time, and the wisest economy of it. Yet, blessed be God, whether life be longer or shorter, it will be found sufficient, if only we rightly occupy it. As King Alfred, when asked how he found time for so many duties, replied, "He found it, by never losing

it." Even a short life, if improved, may become a long one. "The fear of the Lord prolongeth days." "The child shall die an hundred years old."

But again, not only have we the requisite *time*, but also the requisite *talent* for our work. As each servant has a special work, so he has a special fitness for it. He has special gifts for it, if only he will find them out, and stir them up, and turn them to account. In the parable of the talents (Matth. xxv. 15), it is said of the Master's servants, that "unto one he gave *five* talents, to another *two*, and to another *one*; to every man, *according to his several ability*." And so our Lord wisely distributes to every man his several talents or gifts, according to his work, and according to his several capacity or ability to improve them. There is a perfect adaptation between the work and the worker, between the kind of the work given, and the capacity of the worker. Whatever work the Lord may have assigned to any of us, we may be sure we have got the necessary gifts and qualifications, if only we will know them and improve them.

"God gives to every man
The virtue, temper, understanding, taste,
That lifts him into life, and lets him fall
Just in the niche he was ordained to fill."

And hence it is that, by a careful study of our several gifts and capacities (along with the use of other means), we may be able to find out what is the peculiar sphere we are called to fill, and the peculiar work we

are called to do. From a neglect of this study, there are, alas! many, even of good Christian people, who mistake their mission in life, and ignorantly address themselves to some calling or profession for which they are totally unfit, and don't, it may be, discover their mistake, until the best part of life is over, and it is too late to retrace their steps. Many valuable lives, that in some other sphere would have been a strength and ornament to the Church and the world, have been thrown away for want of a little timely reflection. Many good men have gone on blundering through life, because they thought themselves called to some sphere or other, for which they had not the proper qualifications, whether bodily, mental, or spiritual, and in the want of which, if only they had duly reflected, they might have seen it was not God's design they should occupy that sphere.

Some have devoted themselves to the Christian ministry, who had neither *head* nor *heart* for it, and some who wanted the former, and some the latter. Others, too, have been deficient in the necessary physical stamen. But in any case, the mistake committed and the mischief done may have been irreparable. In some other profession they might have shone, but it was too evident they had misread their call to the ministry. Grace is no doubt the first and chief requisite; but brains, and muscle, and common sense, are needed too, and now more than ever.

One day, a young man waited on Dr Brown of

Haddington, and informed him that he wished to be a preacher of the gospel. But, finding him weak in intellect and strong in conceit, he advised him against it. The young man said, "But I wish to preach and glorify God." "My young friend," said Brown, "a man may glorify God by making broom-besoms. Stick to your trade, and glorify God by your walk and conversation."

It is of the last importance that a man should study the gifts or qualifications which God has given him, in order to know his mission and work, and choose his profession or trade. And every one should be careful not to think either too highly or too meanly of himself. "For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him?" Now "consider what I say, and the Lord give thee understanding in all things."

But once more, while God gives to every one of his servants, not only special work to do, but the requisite time and talents for it, so he will also, if they ask him, give *the requisite strength*. He will make good the promise—"As thy days, so shall thy strength be." He will give physical strength, and will exact and expect no more work than he gives ability for. He will also strengthen his people with strength in their souls. "He sendeth no man a warfare on his own charges." "If," as one says, "the voyage is long, he will victual the ship accordingly." As a father who, when sending his boy to school away from home, says to him, "Now, my boy, whatever needful expenses you incur

in your journey, and for your board and education, I'll charge myself with it all," so our Heavenly Father says to each and all of his children, "Whatever supplies and succours you need by the way, whether for your work or warfare, just put it down to my account, draw upon me, and I shall disburse the whole." And as it hath pleased the Father that in Jesus Christ all fulness should dwell, he would have all our drafts presented and paid through him. He virtually says to us, in all our straits, "Go to Jesus," just as Pharaoh told the famished Egyptians to "go to Joseph." "Labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for that which endureth to everlasting life, which the Son of Man shall give unto you; for him hath God the Father sealed." In Christ Jesus there is an exhaustless granary of grace. And, if only we draw upon him, we shall be able to say—"And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace."

Referring to the mission on which he had sent his disciples, Jesus asked—"Lacked ye anything?" And they said, "Nothing." Neither will any servant of his, that seeks his promised grace, and in reliance on it, performs his allotted work. The precious promise, "My grace is sufficient for thee," will cover all your necessities. For "God is able to make all grace to abound towards you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work."

What were all other gifts and acquirements, without divine grace to enable us to use them aright? Alas!

how many gifted workers have completely failed, because they trusted to their gifts, and did not realise their need of grace, and did not get it, because they did not apply for it !

And yet even sometimes those have failed who got grace, because they did not co-operate with it, and stir up the gift of God that was in them. Paul lets us into the secret of successful working, where he says—" And the grace of God which was bestowed upon me was not in vain ; but I laboured more abundantly than they all : yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me."

Grace is given not as a sedative or a soporific, but as a stimulus to work. And not only as a stimulus, but *a strength*, yea a real, the only real strength. Great indeed is the work which every Christian has to do—a work too great even for an angel to accomplish—but he has more than an angel's strength promised and provided, even the strength of Omnipotence, which, yoked to his weakness, will enable him to say—" I can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me."



IV.

WORK SPECIALLY GIVEN.

(Continuation.)

“*To every man his work.*”

MARK xiii. 34.

“The mill will never grind
With the water that is past.”

N the foregoing chapter, the kind and quality of the work given, and the qualifications of the worker, were duly considered. The two are closely linked together. God's plan must not be inverted. His will must shape our work. And our work must enlist all our talents and energies. And how should it stimulate us in the use of them, and make us work with a will, to remember, as we advance a step further, and now add—

(III)

If the work allotted to any one is not done by him, it can be done by no other for him.

This position may be established, and naturally arises out of what has already been laid down. It

has been affirmed, and must surely be admitted, that every one possesses special gifts for his own special work. And as no other possesses gifts of exactly the same kind, in the same proportion or combination, so no other is equally fitted for doing his work. Every one has some peculiar bodily and mental constitution. There is an endless diversity of character and disposition. No two minds are cast exactly in the same mould or type. Every one has an individuality of his own. And then the relation in which every one stands to those about him is different from that of every other. No two persons have entirely the same surroundings. Every one moves in an orbit of his own. He has his own sphere, and his own share of influence. Every one, so to speak, carries his own atmosphere about with him. Jacob may dress like Esau, and may try to personate him, but the voice is still Jacob's, and the whole acting and outcome of character is Jacob's. Old Isaac, blind as he was, smelt the deception, and suspected the fraud.

So no one can properly take the place of another, or do his work. My own work belongs exclusively to me, just as much as the gifts and qualifications for its right performance. And I have no right to relegate that work to another. And no other could take it up and perform it, unless I could put him exactly in my position, and make over my peculiar gifts and qualifications, in short, my own individuality, to him.

My work may be a very humble one, and my sphere

a very lowly and obscure one ; still as they are mine, the responsibility of filling the one and doing the other fall entirely to me. And how much should it magnify both in my eyes to remember, that no one in the universe can take my place or do the work allotted to me ! Lowly disciple of Jesus, as you could not take Gabriel's place, so neither could Gabriel take yours. He would just be as unfit for your work as you for his.

And your work is just as necessary and as useful in its own place as his. They are both integral parts of one great whole. The glow-worm, with its unpretending lamp and modest light, is just as really fulfilling its mission as the full-orbed luminary of day, careering and blazing through the skies. Both are ordained of God—both are his servants.

In a large household the under-servants are just as indispensable as the upper. The message boy or the little maid is as needful as the steward ; the hewer of wood and the drawer of water, as the forester or the factor. The little maid, in the house of Naaman the Syrian, rendered even more valuable service than all the rest of the servants.

Let no servant of Jesus Christ, then, undervalue either his place or work. The glory of the Master throws a halo of glory around all his servants. He despises not any, but honours all, even the humblest of them. They are all "kings and priests to God and his Father," and this lends a grandeur and importance to their work. Wherever their lot is cast, "there," we might say, "they

dwell with the King for his work." The work assigned to each is as important as it is imperial. No one can be wanted, and no one's work can be dispensed with, nor devolved on another.

A mere glance at the nature of the work given each of us to do, will at once show how *intransferable* it is.

Faith and repentance are personal duties, and necessary to salvation. Now no one in the universe can repent and believe for me. These acts, if performed at all, must be performed by myself. I must exercise a personal faith in a personal Redeemer. Neither can I pray by proxy. Others indeed may pray for me, but that won't stand as a substitute for my own prayers. Although all God's saints should pray for me, that won't profit me, if I don't pray for myself. Some poor Chinese attempt to pray by turning round a revolving cylinder or wheel, on which has been pasted a number of prayers and petitions. But such mechanical praying is not prayer. And the mere repetition of ever so many Paternosters or Ave Marias is no better. It is a solemn farce. I must pray to God alone, and in the name of Jesus. And I must pray with the understanding. I must pray with the spirit.

Then, again, take any of the relations of life. Are you a parent, are you a mother? Then next to the care of your own soul, the care of your children is your first and chief concern. And if, under the pretext of doing more spiritual work, you gad about and neglect them, you are committing not only a great error, but a great

sin. You cannot strip yourself of your parental responsibility, and turn over upon another, not even a sabbath-school teacher, what the Lord has specially called and qualified you to do yourself. None can properly fill a father's or a mother's place, even when, in providence, they may be sundered from their children for a time. It is of the last importance to keep up the parental tie, and to mould the young plastic mind by the power of the parental love. But then the children must not think that their parents' piety will stand for them. They must not think to creep into heaven under their cloak. As the children cannot answer for the parents, so neither the parents for the children. "No one can redeem his brother," nor his child. "If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself."

Are you in business? Then the qualities of truth and justice and generosity, which are indispensable to a right discharge of duty, must be found in you and practised by you. Another cannot be just for you, if you secretly practise injustice yourself. Another cannot personate truth for you, if you do not speak the truth in and from your heart. The Christian liberality of another will not be accepted for you.

Then the varied cares and crosses, temptations and trials of life, must be borne by every one personally and alone. "The heart knoweth his own bitterness, and a stranger doth not intermeddle with his joy." Every one must be personally exercised in his own spirit, whether with respect to the joys or sorrows of life.

And no less than the inward exercises of soul, are the outward acts to which these may prompt, to be performed by the individual himself. The well-doing which belongs to me, I cannot hand over to another.

For, even were it possible that any of these things could be done by another, not only would I lose the right to claim them as my own acts, but I would lose the benefit of all the discipline to which the doing of them was intended to subject my own spirit. Many of the duties imposed on the servants of Christ may look like the merest commonplaces, the veriest trivialities; but yet the doing of them may prove a most salutary discipline. Some of the finest touches, working out the finest issues, may be given to the spirit, even in the discharge of what may look like a treadmill round of duty. And all the long tear and wear of life, all the weary fightings and wrestlings in the body of this death, and on the battle-ground of this earth, may be tutoring and training, bracing and building up the soul for filling a far nobler sphere, and doing a far nobler work in the house not made with hands, the palace of "the King eternal, immortal, and invisible."

Strikingly and beautifully has Charles Kingsley said—"The highest spiritual training is contained in the most paltry physical accidents, and the meanest actual want may be the means of calling into actual life the possible but sleeping embryo of the very noblest faculties. This is a great mystery; but we are animals in time and space; and by time and space and our

animal natures are we educated. Therefore, let us only be patient, patient; O let God, our Father, teach his own lesson in his own way. Let us try to learn it well, and learn it quickly; but do not let us fancy that he will ring the school-bell, and send us to play, before the lesson is learnt."

Another reason why no one can devolve his own work upon another is, that every one has enough to do with his own. Every one has his hands full. But if this be so, is no one then to help another? By all means we are. We ought to be fellow-helpers. But then this is just a part of every man's own work. We are to "bear one another's burdens," while, at the same time, it remains true, that "every man shall bear his own burden." Supposing now, that the Lord lays his hand upon me, or by any necessity withdraws me from my present work, then, of course, that ceases to be *my work* for the time, and there is provision made that another shall take it up as part of *his work*. But there is no provision made for my handing over any part of my work to another, so long as I am able to do it myself. There is no provision for helping drones. There is no premium on idleness.

And yet many lazy Christians would try to shift their responsibility on others, on committees, and associations, and the like. They would shirk their own duty, under the plea that it belongs to the public government, or the Church, or the school. A very convenient shelter surely, under which to screen one's

laziness! As if associated work, or substitutionary labour, could stand for individual responsibility and personal service!

Much to the point are those words of Mr Moody—“We think it a cheap service paying a missionary to live for us his short-lived life in the deserts of India, or a couple of Bible-women to do our work in the hovels of the poor at home; but oh, it is very, very dear, if it take the place of the work which God has given to ‘every man’ to do. It is a just truth, that the world is saved by the substitution of Christ for sinners; but it is likewise a very solemn thought, that the world is being lost by the substitution of one Christian’s work for another.”

One other weighty consideration remains to be pressed, which may well incite to redoubled diligence, in doing “every man his work.”

(IV.)

If our allotted work is not done by us in time, it must be left undone to all eternity.

Look at this truth in its relation to the smaller portions of time. Every day has its own allotted work. And sufficient for the day is the work thereof. Every day, so to speak, has enough to do with itself.

We need not think to make up the arrears of one day by an overstretch of work the next. We need

not think to atone for the laziness of to-day, by the alacrity of to-morrow. Every day has its own tale of work, and will have its own tale to tell. Every day is just what we make it, and will remain so to all eternity. And what has been undone any day must remain, so far as that day is concerned, undone for ever. Lost time can never be recovered. There is sober truth in what was humorously said once of a certain prime minister—"He loses half-an-hour every morning, and runs after it all the day, without being able to overtake it."

When a new day dawns upon me with all its manifold opportunities, both of getting and of doing good, if I redeem or improve it, well and good. If not, these opportunities flit past, one by one, and they never recur again.

Every day has a character and history of its own. And of that history we are each one of us the writer. And once written, it cannot be erased. However anxious we might be, at its close, to rewrite it, in order to make any amendments or alterations or additions, it cannot be. What we have written, we have written.

I can never make it true that any day of my life contained more work than I actually put into it. Whatever work I mean to put into any day, say this present day—whatever prayers, or labours, or sacrifices I mean that this day should contain—I must put into it, while the day is passing, because, after it is done, I cannot reopen the record, either to add or sub-

tract. The day will just retain, and retain for ever, the impress I have given it during its fleeting hours.

" Now! it is gone. Our brief hours travel past,
Each with its thought or deed, its why or how:
But know, each parting hour gives up a ghost,
To dwell with thee, an eternal now."

I have heard of an ingenious device, invented to secure the discharge of the regular rounds of a night-watchman's duty. There was a revolving cylinder placed in a certain window, with as many cavities as there were hours of the night. And the watchman was required to drop a ball into one of these cavities every hour, to prove that he was not asleep, and that he was busy going his rounds. Well, if any hour he neglected to drop in his ball, he could not retrieve his mistake afterwards. The cylinder went round, and the lost chance could not be recalled, and the empty cavity would testify in the morning to his neglect. Thus it is with the revolving days and hours of life. If we don't seize them, and put into each its own appropriate work, they fly past, and will at last exhibit all the blanks and blemishes by which our lives have been marred, and our souls impoverished, if not imperilled and lost.

And what is thus true of single days and separate portions of life, it will be seen, must be true of life, and of our life-work as a whole. Life is just made up of days, as days of hours, and hours of minutes; and what we make of these segments, such will the life-

circle be. A house, when built, is found composed of so many separate bricks or stones, of so many successive layers or tiers; and according to the kind of materials, and the way in which they are put together, such is the house. And thus is life built up of successive days and hours, and according to the kind of work put into each, such will our life-work be. And how solemn the thought that we are building for eternity! We are born to immortality, and our works too. Our lives will be stamped for ever with the characters we have graven on them here. The links we have forged in life's chain will never be unbound. The threads we have woven into life's warp and woof will never be unwound.

“ Each spirit weaves the robe it wears
From out life's busy loom,
And common tasks and daily cares
Make up the threads of doom.

Would'st thou the varied future read?
The harvest answereth to the seed.
Shall heaven ere crown the victor's brow?
Ask tidings of the battle now.”

Now is the time for sowing the precious seed, that will bear fruit to life eternal; but once let the harvest be past and the summer ended, and not another seed can be dropped into the ground. Now is the time to turn the tide of battle to victory's side, but once let death's hoarse blast ring in the fight, and the issues are determined and decided for ever.

We have all but one life, and however we spend it, once it *is* spent, we cannot recall it, we cannot retrace it, we cannot reverse it. Once the sand-glass of life has run out, we cannot upturn it, and get another chance. Once its golden sands are run out, they are run out for ever.

And not only is the past irrecoverable and irredeemable, but *indelible*.

“ Indestructible archives!
Sacred manuscripts of lives.”

Even God himself cannot alter the past. He cannot make our lives, at their close, different from what they have been. He cannot make it true that we did what we did not. He cannot make it true that we put into our lives what we did not put.

No doubt, while here, blessed be God! we may receive forgiveness for the sins of the past. If only our sins are truly repented of, they will certainly be all forgiven, so that God will never remember them any more, nor suffer them ever again to rise up to condemn us. If forgiven at all, they are freely, fully, and everlastinglly forgiven. The forgiven soul is washed, and made whiter than snow. “ Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow: though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” What a precious assurance this is, that there *is* forgiveness with God, and such forgiveness! Without this assurance,

the thought of the guilty and irredeemable past would plunge us into despair. But with it, hope is inspired. Pardon is freely proffered to all ; and pardon, when given, is alike plenary to all who receive it.

Then again, it is no less true, that being freely pardoned, we are also personally accepted, we are completely justified, and perfectly saved. Not only are our sins imputed to Christ, but his all-perfect righteousness is imputed to us. We stand accepted in him. We are accepted even as he is accepted, and for his name's sake. As he was completely justified, so are we "complete in him." All believers are justified alike.

But although, on these grounds, there is and will be no difference, yet there are differences that will and must arise out of the different lives that have been lived on earth, and which will score their mark, and leave their impress on all the ages to come. While all sins, truly repented of, will be freely and fully pardoned, and the sinner, in his own person, perfectly accepted and completely saved ; yet a lower or a higher place in the kingdom of heaven will, doubtless, be assigned according to the character and complexion of the life on earth. That life, in its issues, will go on for ever. That such and such sins were committed on earth will and must remain a fact to all eternity, and certain issues, as flowing out of that fact, and as indicated by the higher or the lower place, will remain too.

A familiar illustration may serve to cast some light on this startling truth. There was a little boy, whose

loving father wished very much that he should be a good boy. And in order, if possible, to furnish him with a check against doing wrong, and an encouragement to do right, he said he would drive a nail into a post for every bad deed, and pull out one for every good deed. Now the little fellow tried very much to be good, and though from time to time a number of nails were driven in, yet after a while they were all drawn out. Afterwards the father was telling his dear boy how happy he was to see that not one nail now was left, but he was much surprised to find his boy weeping, when he expected to see him jumping for joy. On being asked the reason, he said, "Yes, father, the nails are all gone, but the marks are there still."

What a lesson may this simple tale read to all ! Is it not possible that our sins may all be forgiven, and yet certain marks left—that our sins may be all blotted out, and yet certain blanks, certain issues or consequences, arising out of them, be found remaining ? The removal of the guilt can never alter the fact that such and such sins were committed. For example, how can it ever cease to be true, that David had committed some great crimes, that Manasseh had filled Jerusalem with blood, that Peter had denied his Master, and that Paul had been a persecutor and injurious ? But the remembrance of these and such-like sins, which were all forgiven, it may be said, will only serve to swell the hallelujahs of the redeemed to all eternity. Doubtless they will, because, where sin

abounded, grace did much more abound, and because he that is forgiven much will love much, and love will be the key-note of the songs of eternity.

Yet if it be true, as Scripture asserts, that "your sins have withholden good things from you," may it not be the case that the falls of God's saints have hindered their elevation to a still higher point than that which they reached, and to that extent have impoverished them to all eternity? May it not be the case, too, that through those sins that were committed previous to conversion, habits may have been induced, that militated more or less against the soul's progress afterwards, and retarded it in its heavenward march? The question may be put simply thus: Will the redeemed be poorer or richer for ever, according as they have committed more or fewer sins on earth, and been longer or shorter time under the power of evil habits, and been converted later or earlier in life, and been less or more faithful afterwards in serving Christ and glorifying their Father in heaven? If so, then there must be certain fruits or effects of sin, that will abide for ever. And does not Scripture itself teach us, that it is possible to build on the right foundation, and yet to build thereon not only gold, and silver, and precious stones, but also wood, and hay, and stubble? And does it not speak of the fire trying every man's work? And does it not tell us that "if any man's work shall be burned, *he shall suffer loss*, but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire?"

A few examples may help still farther to clear up the point.

Take now a neglected and wasted youth. Can any after-thought or painful regrets ever wholly retrieve such neglect? With much force, yet with much truth, has a popular living preacher said—"A man wakes up at forty years of age, and finds that his youth has been wasted, and he strives to get back his early advantages. Does he get them back? the days of boyhood, the days of college, the days under his father's roof? 'Oh,' he says, 'if I could only get these times back again, how I would improve them!' My brother, you will never get them back. They are gone, gone! You may be very sorry about it, and God may forgive you, so that you may at last reach heaven; but you will never get over some of the mishaps that have come to your soul, as a result of your neglect of early duty. You may try to undo it; you cannot undo it." "I say this," he adds, "for the benefit of young men and women. I want them to understand that eternity is wrapped up in this hour; that the sins of youth we never get over; that you are now fashioning the mould in which your great future is to run; that a minute, instead of being sixty seconds long, is made up of everlasting ages."

But not in reference only to the days of youth, but to every other period of life, is it true that all, even of those who shall be eternally saved, will reap more or less abundantly, according as they have improved or

neglected to improve, their opportunities here. Is it not the case, that it will add immensely to the eternal joy and blessedness of those of the redeemed, who have been the instruments of saving others? Will their crown not shine with a brighter radiance, even as the stars for ever and ever?

"All in God's own light complete;
Brightest they whose holy feet,
Faithful to his service sweet,
Nearest to their Master trod,
Winning wandering souls to God."

Well, if through my sloth and supineness, my selfishness and sin, I have let slip opportunities of saving the lost, won't I, if saved myself, yet be the poorer to all eternity for my neglect? Thus, while the sin is forgiven, there is a mark left.

Again, how solemn the reflection, if, by my sin before or after conversion, I have wounded any heart, if by my example I have drawn any one into sin, or confirmed any one in his evil ways, that, although repenting of my sin, I have been or will be forgiven, yet its effects on others may possibly never be undone! The unguarded word by which I had wounded the feelings of another may have left a sting which can never be removed. Through my parental neglect, my children may have lost what no after-sorrow can replace, and possibly have lost their own souls. And those whom, in the days of my ungodliness, I decoyed into the paths of folly and sin, may perhaps never be reclaimed.

I may never be able to eliminate the poison of my evil example or evil influence over them.

The foregoing views may appear to some to be novel and strange. But they are views that have been held and advanced by the most eminent Christians and divines, as in strict accordance with the teachings of Scripture. The following extract from the life of Dr Judson, the renowned missionary of Burmah, will show how entirely he accepted, and how earnestly he enforced those views. "In a few days, and our work will be done, and when it is once done, it will be done to all eternity. A life once spent is irrevocable. It will remain to be contemplated through eternity. If it be marked with sins, the marks will be indelible. If it has been a useless life, it can never be improved. Such it will stand for ever and ever. The same may be said of each day. When it is once past, it is gone for ever. All the marks we put on it, it will exhibit for ever. It will never become less true that such a day was spent in such a manner. Each day will not only be a witness of our conduct, but will affect our everlasting destiny. No day will lose its share of influence in determining where shall be our seat in heaven, or our place in hell. Let us, then, resolve to send the day into eternity in such a garb as we shall wish it to wear for ever. And at night, let us reflect that one day more is irrevocably gone, is indelibly marked."

What a powerful incentive should such facts furnish

to all, to watch and pray lest they enter into temptation or fall into sin, because, when once sin is committed, although it may be forgiven, yet it must leave indelible traces behind it to all eternity.

And seeing that so many sins have already stained the past, how anxious should all be to secure that forgiveness and that renewal of nature, by which its stain may be removed from their own hearts, and its effects on others arrested, counteracted, and undone, as far as possible.

Now, only through repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, can remission of sins be obtained. Therefore let none delay their repentance, because, if they die impenitent, there can be no repentance and no forgiveness in the other world. The lost in hell could find no place for repentance, though they should seek it carefully with tears. There will be room, indeed, for remorse and anguish and despair, but none for that "godly sorrow that worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of." Respecting the grace of repentance, it will be emphatically true, that what has been left undone in time must be left undone for ever.

And indeed, even in this world, if repentance is wilfully and wickedly delayed, it may be found that the heart has grown so hard and callous, that nothing will cause it to relent, nothing will break it, nothing will melt it. And so far as his final doom is concerned, it may be all one to the hardened sinner, as if he had

already passed the boundary-line between time and eternity.

Another lesson that may well be learned from this whole subject is, that if through grace we have repented and been forgiven, we should be all the more careful and watchful to improve the future, however long or short it may be, and to impress into it all the earnestness, and energy, and zeal of a grateful and glowing love, and of a quickened and consecrated life. The thought of past neglects and former failures should be a spur to redoubled diligence in all time coming, and should issue in a resolute and practical determination to abound more and more in the work of the Lord. What earnest and energetic work did those noble veterans Moses, and Caleb, and Joshua, crowd into their latter years! How fully they followed the Lord, and how faithfully they served their generation, according to his will!

Let all remember that whatever they mean to put into life, must be put into it now, while life lasts, and while yet they are breathing men. All the loving thoughts of God and of one another, all the high resolves and heavenward aspirations, all the kind looks and gracious words, all the fervent prayers and supplications, all the noble and generous deeds, all the stern struggles and actual triumphs over sin, all the testimonies for truth and righteousness, all the efforts for the salvation of the lost, all the sympathy for the suffering and the sorrowing, all the offerings for the cause of Christ, all the acts of self-

denial and self-sacrifice for his name's sake, which they mean to put into their lives, and would wish embodied in the autobiography they are now unconsciously writing day by day and hour by hour,—all these they must put in while yet living actors on the passing stage of time, and before the great curtain drops, which is to close for ever the solemn and eventful drama.

Oh, if we would make this mortal life of ours really grand and noble, let us give to God not the fag-end of it, not a miserable fragment of it, but the cream of it, the strength of it, the best of it, yea, the whole of it—youth's confiding trust, aspiring hope, and enthusiastic love—manhood's sage wisdom and intrepid courage—and old age's mellow fruits and golden grain. Let all be laid on the altar as a living sacrifice to God, and unreservedly and ungrudgingly consecrated to his service and glory.

How well are the lessons of the foregoing chapter summed up in the sparkling words of the simple yet suggestive hymn—

THE WATER MILL.

" Listen to the water mill
Through the livelong day,
How the clicking of the wheel
Wears the weary hours away.
Languidly the autumn wind
Stirs the withered leaves ;
On the field the reapers sing,
Binding up the sheaves ;

And a proverb haunts my mind,
And as a spell is cast,
‘The mill will never grind
With the water that is past.’

Summer winds revive no more
Leaves strown over earth and main,
And the sickle ne’er can reap
The gathered grain again;
And the rippling stream flows on,
Tranquil, deep, and still,
Never gliding back again
To the water-mill.
Truly speaks the proverb old,
With a meaning vast:
‘The mill will never grind
With the water that is past.’

O the wasted hours of life
That have swiftly drifted by !
O the good we might have done !
Gone ! lost without a sigh !
Love that we might once have saved,
By a single kindly word !
Thoughts conceived, but ne’er expressed,
Perishing, unpenn’d, unheard !
Take the proverb to thy soul—
Take and clasp it fast :
‘The mill will never grind
With the water that is past.’

O ! love thy God and fellow-man,
Thyself consider last,
For come it will, when thou must scan
Dark errors of the past.
And when the fight of life is o’er,
And earth recedes from view,

And heaven in all its glory shines,
 Midst the pure, the good, the true—
 Then you'll see more clearly
 The proverb deep and vast :
 'The mill will never grind
 With the water that is past.'

Take the lesson to thyself,
 Loving hearts and true ;
 Golden years are fleeting by,
 Youth is passing too.
 Learn to make the most of life,
 Lose no happy day ;
 Time will ne'er return sweet joys
 Neglected, thrown away.
 Leave no tender word unsaid,
 But love while love shall last—
 The mill will never grind
 With the water that is past.'

Work while yet the sun doth shine,
 Now of strength and will ;
 Never does the streamlet glide
 Useless by the mill ;
 Wait not till to-morrow's sun
 Beams brightly on thy way,
 All that thou canst call thine own
 Lies in the phrase 'to-day.'
 Or intellect, or blooming health
 May not, will not always last :
 'The mill will never grind
 With the water that is past.' "



V.

WORK ENERGETICALLY DONE.

"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might, for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither thou goest." ECCLESIASTES ix. 10.

"God working mightily in the human heart, is the spring of all-abiding spiritual power; and it is only as men follow out the sublime promptings of the inward spiritual life, that they can do great things for God." LIVINGSTONE.



THROUGHOUT the book of Ecclesiastes there is kept up a sort of dialogue or dispute between faith and scepticism. Perhaps the conflict may be regarded as a vivid reflection of the writer's own mind during a particular period of his spiritual history. Dark shadows of doubt and unbelief, and bright gleams of celestial truth, seem alternately to fit across the mind. Hence the widely diverse and apparently contradictory statements which meet the eye in every other chapter of this book.

But although, amid the dust and din of warring

elements, it may sometimes be difficult to distinguish truth from falsehood, the ironical and enigmatical from the sober and the practical; yet, on the whole, the truth is seen emerging victorious out of the strife, and towering in lofty supremacy over all the Protean forms of error.

Amid all that is dark and mysterious in the providence of God, there is enough of light to guide our faltering footsteps, and to approve the choice and practice of wisdom as our safest and happiest course.

In the above chapter of this book, we seem to be admonished, instead of attempting to solve the dark and difficult problems of life, thankfully to enjoy its blessings, eagerly to seize its opportunities, and faithfully and energetically to perform its duties, as knowing that the present scene and season of probation will soon close in upon us, the curtain drop, and our earthly history, with all its momentous issues, be wound up for ever.

"Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart, for God now accepteth thy works." Such counsel we conceive to be given to the true disciples of wisdom, to those whose persons have been accepted in the sight of God—"accepted in the Beloved,"—and who, being thus accepted themselves, could humbly look for the acceptance of their works, for Jesus name's sake. No one has such a clear and undisputed right to rejoice as the true Christian. No one is possessed of such a sure, solid, and lasting ground

of joy. While others can rejoice only when God is forgotten, and when they think he is out of sight, because out of mind, the Christian can and ought to rejoice, not only in God, but *before* God, yea, exceedingly rejoice.

He may eat his meat with a glad and grateful joy, "with singleness of heart, praising the Lord." Not, indeed, that he is ever to exceed the bounds of moderation, and join in unhallowed mirth. While rejoicing, he must needs "rejoice with trembling," for all earthly comforts and blessings are but short-lived. Life is fleeting, and death will soon be at the door. Moreover, life is serious, and there is no time to trifle. There is work to be done, there are duties to be discharged, burdens to be borne, and trials to be met, as well as comforts to be enjoyed. And the enjoyment of the comforts, we must make subordinate and subservient to the faithful doing of the work, and energetic performance of the duties of life.

"*Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might,*" &c.

These words suggest three lines of thought—*What* we are to do; *How* we are to do it; and *Why* we are to do it.

On the first of these it is needless to enlarge, after what has been said before. It will suffice to gather up and group together some of the more salient points.

I.

What we are to do.

Every one, it appears, has something to do. "To every man his work." The hints already given may serve to guide both inquiring sinners and inquiring saints to their proper sphere of work.

These hints are here summed up in the words of the preacher—"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do." Yet, at first sight, this might seem to make one's life-work a very capricious and desultory thing. If we are just to take up what happens to turn up, it might seem to do away with all idea of order and method, and to lead only to an objectless, resultless life. As if our life-motto were—"Everything by turns, and nothing long."

If I am only to do what my hands find to do, perhaps I may find nothing to do. But those who find nothing to do, are usually those who do nothing to find. You would think they had put out their eyes, and parted with their hands. "None of the men of might have found their hands." If men cannot find their hands, no wonder if their hands cannot find their work. If men find nothing to do in a world such as this, they are wilfully blind, and may well fear lest the damning clause be found in their indictment at last—"Thou wicked and slothful servant."

"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do," is evidently

correlated to "Whatsoever is found to thy hand to do." It is, doubtless, assumed that we find to do what is found to us; in other words, that we take up with our hands what is laid to our hands.

Our life being a plan of God's, our life-work is not a haphazard kind of work. It has already been all mapped out and methodised. And our duty and our wisdom will be to fall in with God's plan, and to take up the work as he gives it out to us to do.

Now, in answer to the prayer, honestly and earnestly put up—"What shall I do, Lord?" we shall find that there is given to "every man his work." Waiting on the Lord, and watching for an answer to our prayers, we shall have our individual work evolved, and the path of duty made plain. And this, day by day, and hour by hour.

We shall not merely stumble upon our work, but it will come up before us, at the right time, and in the right place. We may not be permitted to see far ahead; but as we advance, step by step, our pathway will be opened up before us, and we shall find our work waiting for us, instead of our having to wait for it.

In taking up our work, we must see that we take it in the order in which it is presented to us. Many would invert God's order, but they can never succeed.

Faith and repentance stand first in order. They are the first and foremost duty of every sinner—"repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." Without these, we cannot do any work for

the Lord. "Without faith, it is impossible to please him." Until we repent and are forgiven, we are yet enemies to God; and how can he receive or approve the acts done by an enemy? Certainly not, if we are still persisting in our rebellion, and refusing to frame our doings to return to him. Nothing can be a substitute for our personal submission. And nothing can take precedence of it. We must first give our own selves to the Lord. That is our primary and present duty, if we have not already done it.

Then and then only are we in a right attitude for taking up our life-work. But having once given ourselves to the Lord, and been accepted in him, we should be ready to do whatsoever his hands have found for our hands to do.

Yes, *whatsoever!* Some duties may, doubtless, be more pleasant and others more irksome, but we must not elect for ourselves which to take up, and which to let alone. A servant may not choose and chalk out his work for himself, but just carry out his master's instructions and wishes. And so Christ's servants must faithfully attend to his orders, and do his will. And their fidelity as servants ought to be conjoined with all the cordiality of friends. "Henceforth," said Jesus to his disciples, "I call you not servants, but friends." On the other hand, the familiarity of friendship must never supersede, but rather enhance, the obligation of service. "Now are ye my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you."

Leaving it to the Master to appoint us our place and work, it is ours to fall in with his appointments, to follow out his purposes, and fill up his plans. The work allotted may seem very humble and unheroic; it may be arduous and toilsome; it may even be repulsive and mortifying to human pride; yet if it come up in the providence of God, if it is, as it were, laid to our door and put into our hands, we must not turn away from it, we must not sulk at it, nor try to shirk it, but meekly accept the situation, and try to make the most of it, and turn its possibilities to the best account.

It is easy, indeed, to be self-complacent and self-satisfied at our work, when there is little or nothing to ruffle the temper or try the patience; but we shall best approve ourselves as the servants of Christ and the sons of God, by our having a habitual and supreme regard to the divine will in everything.

Most apposite, although homely, are those words of John Newton: "When some people talk of religion, they mean they have heard so many sermons, and performed so many devotions, and thus mistake the means for the end; but true religion is an habitual recollection of God, and intention to serve him; and this turns everything to gold. We are apt to suppose that we need something splendid to evince our devotion; but true religion equals things. Washing plates and cleaning shoes is a high office, if performed in a right spirit. If three angels were sent to earth, they would feel per-

fect indifference who should perform the part of prime-minister, parish-minister, or watchman."

Be our work, then, of a more lofty or lowly description, be it that of active service or of patient endurance, of public trust and notoriety, or of weary, plodding, unseen toil, let it be our high ambition to serve our Lord and Master in the daily ministries of life, content to be or to do what his infinite wisdom has seen meet to appoint for us, and careful only if we may do our allotted work so as to please him now, and meet with his approbation at the great day.

(II.)

How our work is to be done.

The Preacher says—"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, *do it with thy might.*"

The first thing is *to do it*—not merely to talk about doing it, but to do it. As Abner said, when persuading the tribes to take David as their king—"Ye sought for David in time past to be king over you: *now then do it.*" And as the mother of Jesus said to the servants at the marriage in Cana of Galilee, "Whatsoever he saith to you, *do it.*"

We are not to trouble ourselves about what others say or do, nor stand waiting until they begin, or wondering at their delay, but we are just to set about our own work, and attend to our own duty. If every

one were to wait for another, our life-work would soon come to a stand. The negligence or supineness of others won't excuse us. If we were to require anything like a general consent among professing Christians to do their part, before we should begin ours, the world would never be converted. Whether others will do their part or not, let us do ours. And so we shall not only prove ourselves to be in earnest, but may provoke the zeal of others.

If we would do our work aright, we must do it *with our might*. How much is implied in this expression!

(1.)

We should do it with the might of conscious weakness.

There is what Milton calls, "the invincible might of weakness"—of felt, conscious weakness. In this feeling will be found one deep secret of our real strength. As Paul said in that strange paradox—"When I am weak, then am I strong." Of which the converse is no less true—When I am strong, when I think I am strong, and trust to my fancied strength, then I am weak indeed. It is said of Uzziah—"But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction." A Christian, when tempted to trust to his own strength, is in a sense weaker than other men. Peter knew this to his cost. His self-confident boast—"Though all men should deny thee, yet will not I,"—"Though I

should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee," was followed by a humiliating fall. Let his fall be a beacon to others. Let us not be high-minded, but fear alway. If we say we have no fear, we are probably very near a fall. If we venture into scenes of temptation, thinking that our principles are proof against the fire, we shall not come out unscathed.

Our strength and safety lie in low self-abasing views of ourselves, conjoined with high thoughts of Christ. When we see that we have nothing of our own, that we are poor, penniless bankrupts, we shall be all the more willing to draw upon him, yea, to receive all from him, out of the riches of his great liberality. Emptied of self, we are then free to be filled out of his fulness. His strength is glorified in using our weakness. "My strength," he says, "is made perfect in weakness." Thus, in a deep sense, perfect weakness becomes perfect strength. "He that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David, and the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the Lord before them."

"Oh," says one, "to be able to be nothing for Christ's sake. This is the height of moral glory."

" Oh ! to be nothing, nothing !
 Only to lie at his feet,
 A broken and emptied vessel,
 For the Master's use made meet.

Emptied, that he might fill me,
 As forth to his service I go :
Broken, that so unhindered
 His life through me should flow."

Along the pathway of humiliation lies the pathway of power and the true road to victory. There is might in weakness. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it" with the might of weakness.

(2.)

Let us do it with the might of simple faith.

Weakness rises into might only when it is inspired by faith.

"And weakness will be power,
If leaning, Lord, on thee."

Without faith we are powerless, we are literally "without strength." Sin has smitten us with moral impotency. It has disabled us for work. It were impossible to work under the crushing burden of sin or the pressure of guilt. But faith has lever-power to lift off the mountain-weight of sin and guilt. This it does, by lifting up the eye to the *Crucified One*, the Great Burden-Bearer. It has power, too, to draw down the inspiration of a lively hope, which is the spring and spur of all joyous work, by pointing to the *Risen One*. It brings us under the spell and power of his resurrection. Moreover, faith follows the ascended Saviour within the veil, and beholds him as the *Crowned One*, invested with all power, both in heaven and earth, and fetches down that power next, and yokes it to the others, and all the three to human weakness.

What is faith but human weakness taking hold of divine strength? 'Tis like the tendrils of the lowly creeper, clinging to and clasping the mighty oak. 'Tis like worm Jacob, holding fast the angel of the covenant, and refusing to let him go without the blessing. 'Tis like sinking Peter, giving his hand to the outstretched hand of Jesus, and then firmly treading on the crested wave.

By faith's grasp of God's hand, held out in the sure word of promise, "the arms of our hands are made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob." The weakness of worm Jacob is exchanged for the strength of Israel—a prince with God. There are two possibilities which may then be paired together. "All things are possible with God," and "all things are possible to him that believeth." In a sense, God's possibilities become ours by faith. "He that believeth on me," said Jesus, "the works that I do shall he do also."

If this be so, then doing our work with the might of faith, we shall be more than equal to all our burdens, we shall be more than a match for all our enemies, we shall be "more than conquerors, through him that loved us." Can any emergency arise that the power of Christ will not be found sufficient for? Through him strengthening us, may we not do and dare all things? Do we not read of those "who through faith, subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of

fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens?"

Go then, believer, in this thy might. Go in faith, and the Lord of hosts shall certainly go with thee.

(3.)

Let us do our work with the might of fervent prayer.

What is prayer, but faith in exercise? By faith we grasp the promise; in prayer we plead it. Prayer is the cry of faith poured into the ear of the Great Promiser. It is the cry of need, at the door of mercy. It is the wrestling with the angel, on whom faith has laid hold.

"Say what is prayer, when it is prayer indeed?
The mighty utterance of a mighty need.
The man is praying, who doth press with might
Out of his darkness into God's own light."

There may be prayer without the form of words. It needs not fine grammar. It may be a mere ejaculation, like a swift-winged arrow darted heavenwards, or a thought flashed, as if along an invisible telegraphic wire, to the throne above, but it will not, it cannot miscarry. If only our prayers are sped upwards in the name of Jesus, they must speed well. In sending a letter to a friend, we often send it directed to the care of another. Ah well, those prayers that are addressed to the care of Jesus, that bear the superscription of

his name, will certainly meet with a safe delivery, and secure a ready response.

"Whatsoever," says Christ, "ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you." And again, "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it." That, surely, is a large promise, of boundless amplitude; but the name of Jesus is a sufficient guarantee for its fulfilment.

If this be so, then prayer is one of the mightiest powers in the universe. Thou hast power to move the heart of him who rules the universe. "Thou hast power to make thy voice heard beyond the stars: where the thunders die out in silence, thou shalt wake the echoes of eternity. The ear of God himself shall listen, and the hand of God himself shall yield to thy will."

Let us, then, wield this power for the accomplishment of our life-work. Let us try the might of prayer. Let us pray and not faint. No doubt, some scientists tell us that the fixity of natural laws is antagonistic to the power and prevalency of prayer. But those who talk thus forget or ignore the fact that there are other and higher spiritual laws, in subordination to which the others were framed, and in harmony with which they are ordained to move. And prayer belongs to that spiritual realm. Prayer hangs on the divine promise, and that again on the divine purpose. And so God's purposes and his people's prayers, instead of clashing, mutually clasp each other.

The world exists for the Church, as the Church for Christ. "All things," says Paul, "are for your sakes." And in the divine government of the world, these spiritual laws obtain and dominate "for your sakes." Now one of these laws is embraced in the promise—"Ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."

But is this promise not conditioned in some way? Yes, in this way: "If we ask anything according to his (God's) will, he heareth us." That is to say, our will must be in harmony with God's. And how is this to be effected? "If ye abide in me," said Christ, "and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." Abiding in Christ will secure the bringing of our will into conformity with God's will. And where the two run parallel, there is nothing that can bar the answer to prayer. Surely God must have power to carry out his own will? "For of him, and through him, and to him are all things, to whom be glory for ever, Amen."

But if the answer to prayer is conditioned by God's will, does not this impose a limitation on the promise? None really. For God's will is most holy, just, and good—it is the fiat of omnipotent love. So we might even say that God's will is to be measured by his ability. "What he hath promised, he is able also to perform." Our needs certainly can never exceed his resources. "My God," says Paul, "shall supply all you need, according to his riches in glory, by Christ Jesus."

Now prayer is the golden magic master-key to open this divine treasure-house of grace and glory. All that we need for our work or warfare, we may have for the asking. What our hand findeth to do, let us only pray that we may find grace to do, and we shall not fail in obtaining such an abounding all-sufficieney of grace as shall enable us to abound unto every good work.

"Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory, in the Church by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end, Amen."

(4.)

Let us do our work with the might of patient love.

There is power in patience. There is a might in meekness. The meek are the true monarchs of the world. "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." He that conquers himself is the greatest conqueror of all. "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city." The patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit. Patience will win the day sooner than passion.

If we lose our temper, we are most likely to lose the battle. What is done in a passion can never be well

done. When the spirit is chafed, we are apt to be hurried into extremes and extravagances, of which in calmer moments we bitterly repent. Good King Asa, being wroth with Hanani the Seer for his fidelity, threw him into prison, "for he was in a rage with him, because of this thing, and Asa oppressed some of the people at the same time."

The fact is, when we are irritated and angry without a cause, we become an easy prey to the tempter. Hence the wisdom of the counsel and caution: "Be ye angry and sin not; let not the sun go down upon your wrath, neither give place to the devil."

Those are most likely to do their work successfully and well, who go about it in an equable, self-recollected, tranquil spirit. How calmly and quietly did our Lord go about his work! "He did not strive nor cry," and yet "he sent forth judgment unto victory." So shall victory be ours, if we are armed with the same mind. His meekness will make us magnanimous—"his gentleness will make us great." It is said of King Jotham, that "he became mighty, because he prepared his ways before the Lord his God." Our best preparation is to wait quietly on the Lord. Waiting thus we shall renew our strength. And in that sense, "our strength is to sit still." It is recorded of a famous general, after whom his enemies were in hot pursuit, that he coolly dismounted from his horse to mend his stirrup, and having put all right, he vaulted into the saddle again, galloped off, and made his escape.

Calmness in the hour of trial is the secret of strength, and the prelude to victory.

Above all, will patient love crown our labours with success. It will conquer all but insuperable difficulties. There is a might and bravery in such love, that carries everything before it. It will do and dare anything.

Though baffled oft,
Yet patient still,
It triumphs sure
O'er every ill.

One of the most wonderful examples of the power of patient love is given in the following touching narrative by Bishop Simpson in one of the "Yale Lectures on Preaching." A young man who had the charge of an institution for imbeciles, had an idiotic child, of five years of age, placed under his care. The child had never spoken or walked, had never chewed any hard substance, or given a look of recognition to a friend. He lay on the floor a mass of flesh, without even ability to turn himself over. The teacher tried in vain to get the slightest recognition from his eye, or to produce the slightest intentional act. Unwilling, however, to give up, he had the poor boy brought to his room for half-an-hour each day, and lay down beside him, hoping to see some favourable sign. To improve the time, he read aloud from some book. One day, at the end of six months, he was unusually weary, and did not read. He soon discovered that the child was uneasy, and was trying to move itself a little, as if to

turn towards him. The thought flashed upon him—it misses the sound of my voice. He turned himself closely to it, brought his mouth over the child's head and after repeated efforts the little fellow succeeded in placing his finger on the teacher's lips, as if to say—make that sound again. The teacher said that moment he felt he had control of that boy. He gained his attention by careful manipulation of his muscles, succeeded in teaching him to walk, and then to read; and at the end of five years he was seen standing on a platform, reading correctly, and accurately answering a number of questions put to him.

What a marvellous triumph of patient love! And yet but a faint shadow of the love of Christ for poor sinners! That love stands alone in its pre-eminence. Yet, let it provoke our imitation. Let us "be followers (imitators) of God, as dear children; and let us walk in love, even as Christ loved us, and gave himself for us." "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren!"

(5.)

Let us do our work with the might of courageous hope.

Calmness must be combined with courage. We must add to our faith, fortitude. The work to be done is both arduous and continuous, and thus very trying

to faith and patience. There are many hindrances to our work, many stumbling-blocks in the way. There are many Sanballats to thwart and obstruct. The foes of our faith are legion. We have fightings without and fears within.

We must, therefore, encourage our hearts, and strengthen our hands in God. Every Christian would need to be a "Greatheart." And Christian hope will largely help to make him so. "And for an helmet the hope of salvation." If one were like to sink, the helmet would be the last to disappear. And so the Christian helmeted with hope, will hold his head above the waters, even when they are swelling high, yea, up to the brim. A hopeful spirit is always a brave and buoyant one. Faint-heartedness can do no mighty works. "The joy of the Lord is our strength." The most hopeful workers have been the most successful. "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost."

It was after unfolding to the Christians at Corinth the magnificent prospects arising out of the hope of a glorious resurrection at last, that the apostle added, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

(6.)

Let us do our work with the might of energetic effort

There is such a thing as sham work—"doing the work of the Lord deceitfully"—in a half-hearted way—with out any real interest in it or love for it. Selfishness and slothfulness are a heavy drag upon our work. But we must resist these solicitations of the flesh, as well as the temptations of Satan. We must stir up our sluggish hearts. We must have "a mind to work." We must gird ourselves to the task. We must put forth honest effort. What our hands find to do, let us do "with both hands earnestly." Let us put our shoulder bravely to the wheel. Let prompt action be followed up by persistent effort.

Promptitude and resolution are invaluable helps to success. A man of energy and courage will often distance a man of superior talent in the race of life. There are few things that differentiate one man from another more than *the power of prompt decision*. While some men are idly dreaming and finely theorising, splitting hairs and trying how nicely they can balance both sides of a question, others are acting promptly and energetically. When some of Napoleon's officers were urging the tremendous difficulties of crossing the Alps, he returned the memorable reply—"There are no Alps to me."

Your vacillating, trimming, temporising sort of people look as if they had been born out of due time. They should have lived in the days of Methuselah, when they might have had more time to weigh evidences, and to study the doctrine of probabilities. They are hardly fit for these high-pressure times. It is men of action, prompt and decisive action, that are needed in these days. Your laggards will be left behind, and shunted to a side.

And not only in regard to great questions and public duties, but to the common every-day work of life, is a dawdling spirit to be deprecated, and a spirit of prompt and energetic action cultivated and carried out.

Oh the might of decision! How bravely it bears one up, in the great battle of life! How many cob-webs it brushes away that blind the eyes of others! How many ghosts and hobgoblins it puts to flight! How much precious time it saves! And how much real hard work it gets through! Oh, if only, as each new duty, or cross, or care comes up, we would, by God's help, but manfully face it, how much lighter it would seem, and how much more easily it would be surmounted! And thus cleaving and clearing our way, how much better would we be fitted and fortified for breasting new duties and trials, than if we went forward to meet them, burdened with the thought of neglected opportunities, and unfulfilled responsibilities in the past!

The burden of present duty will be found enough

without our being haunted with bitter memories of the past. The best way is to keep short accounts, in other words, to pay as we go. Always let us try to do what has to be done, at the right time, and in the right spirit, and go on resolutely and bravely, by "a patient continuance in well-doing," from day to day.

Painstaking and persistent effort will be needed to carry us through. It won't do to take a fit of working, and then call a halt. Those who work spasmodically, only by fits and starts, are not likely to do much, nor to do it well. "Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel."

We have all of us a life-long battle to fight. And we can have no truce. So if we are to fight it out, we must remain in harness till we die. We must never desert our post. We must stand by our captain and our colours. We must hold out and hold on to the end. For only "he that endureth to the end shall be saved." And only he that is faithful unto death, shall receive the crown of life.

(III.)

Why our work should be done.

A weighty reason is given—"For there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither thou goest."

How swiftly and stealthily, yet surely, are life's passing hours speeding us on to the grave!

"Our hearts, though stout and brave,
Still, like muffled drums, are beating
Funeral marches to the grave."

What a solemn procession! And all of us, of necessity, joining in it! No one may drop out of the ranks. No one may skulk away. No one may say, "I beg thee to have me excused." There is no discharge here! No exemption! No exception! All must die. All must go to the grave. And when once the hour is come, then farewell to work, and wisdom, and knowledge. Farewell to all the means of grace and opportunities of salvation. Farewell to Sabbaths, and sermons, and prayers, and all the possibilities of the life that now is. Not that it is meant that, when the soul leaves the body, it will settle down into a state of passivity, inactivity, unconsciousness, or repose. Not that the powers of the soul will be then paralysed, or their sphere of action and influence circumscribed. Nay, these powers will be vastly quickened and intensified, and their sphere augmented beyond all our former conceptions.

But at death there will be a final end, to every one of us, of the present state and order of things. The state of probation will be over for ever. All the materials that shall go to sum up our character and destiny will then have been made up for ever. Our

connection with this present busy world and bustling age will have ceased for ever. We shall have no more a portion in anything that is done under the sun.

The merchant will have closed his ledger for ever. He will mingle no more in the anxious, care-worn crowd that throngs the Exchange. The sudden rises and falls of the money-market, in stocks, or bonds, or shares, will have no interest for him. The farmer will not come back to plough one furrow more. The price of grain or cattle will not have for him the weight of a straw. He will have reaped his last harvest here, and seasons may come and go, and the golden grain may wave in the breeze, but he will heed these things no more than the grass that waves over his grave. The politician will care no more whether Whig or Tory rule. *The Times*, or *Telegraph*, or *Pall Mall Gazette*, or *Saturday Review*, may fire off their brilliant leaders, but they will fall flat and unheeded by him. The author will have dropped his pen, and the scholar his books. And all the lore of earth will be left behind for ever.

And what is more solemn still, if the soul's salvation has not been set about and secured before, it cannot be undertaken then. If we have been thoughtless and foolish before, if the lessons of heavenly wisdom have not been learned before, it will be too late to begin then. There is no *wisdom* in the grave. If precious opportunities have been let slip, if the harvest of gospel privilege and the summer of gospel grace have been allowed to go past, by no ingenuity can they be

recalled then. There is no *device* in the grave. If the work of life has been left undone, it must lie over and undone for ever. There is no *work* in the grave. When that goal is reached, there is a final end to all our purposes, and prayers, and efforts.

And when we think how soon the end will come; how soon those eyes of ours, even the youngest and most sparkling, will be closed in death; how soon those ruddy cheeks will be blanched, and those rosy lips sealed, in the darkness and silence of the tomb; how soon those plastic hands will forget their cunning, and those arms, that may now be locked in fond embrace, be folded in that sleep from which there is no awaking here; and when we remember that not only is it appointed unto all men once to die, but that, after this, is the judgment, the great white throne, the right hand or the left, and then the long, long, lasting and never-ending eternity, surely, surely, we may well resolve, each one, in the strength of God, that whatsoever our hand findeth to do, we shall do it with our might, or, as President Edwards put it in one of his memorable resolutions—

“Resolved, henceforth, to live with all my might.”



VI.

WORK FULLY ACCOMPLISHED.

"I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work thou gavest me to do." JOHN xvii. 4.

"The boon I ask from thee,
Is, by thy grace, to do the work
My God hath set for me.
No willing servant he,
Who seeks his rest before,
Who faints ere yet his day be done,
Or the evening work be o'er."

M. CLAPHAM.

N reading the Intercessory prayer of our Lord, one feels, and in listening to it must have felt still more, as if he were standing in the innermost shrine, the very "holy of holies." As it flows forth, in words of thrilling pathos and power, from the lips of Christ, and as we imagine we hear the accents of his voice falling in subdued and solemn cadence, a hush of breathless silence and holy awe creeps over the soul till the close. And as you recover your breath again, you almost instinctively exclaim—
Ah! that was prayer!

On one occasion, we read that as Jesus was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples asked him, saying, "Lord, teach us to pray." And with good reason might we present a similar request.

Among other features of this prayer, as in that other called the Lord's Prayer, is the supreme regard to the divine honour and glory, which meets us at the very threshold, and which forms the grand key-note to the whole prayer. Conspicuously does this feature stand out in the words—"I have glorified thee upon the earth; I have finished the work thou gavest me to do."

Three lines of thought are here suggested to us.

The life-work;

The sphere of its performance; and

Its consummation.

(I.)

The Life-work.

The pole-star of Christ's life on earth was, to glorify his Father in heaven. And how this was done, we learn from the words just cited, especially as they are found in the revised version—"I glorified thee on the earth, having accomplished the work thou hast given to me to do."

Our Lord had an allotted work to do. It was prescribed to him by his Father. "The work," he says,

"which *thou* gavest me to do." As the Saviour of sinners, the Mediator, he became the Father's servant, while yet continuing, as he could never cease to be, the Father's Son. And as a servant, he had an allotted work to do, as well as an allotted time in which to do it.

The work given him to do was the stupendous task of redeeming, out of a lost world, a people for himself, that "he should give eternal life to as many as the Father had given him." What this task involved, we may gather from his life on earth. Beginning with his mysterious incarnation, and ending with his vicarious death on the cross, it comprised all that lay between. It embraced the thirty years seclusion at Nazareth, and the quiet patient toil, during the greater part of that time, at the carpenter's bench. And it embraced the three years, less or more, of that marvellous ministry, during which he was employed in educating and training the twelve, and when he went about doing good, working mighty miracles, healing all manner of sickness, and preaching everywhere the gospel of the kingdom. It included all the hardships and privations, the travail and tribulation, the reproach and ignominy, the loneliness and desertion, the self-repression and self-sacrifice, the vigils and prayers, the tears and agonies of those never-to-be-forgotten years. It included the unutterable sorrows of Gethsemane, and the appalling horrors and sufferings of Calvary.

In all that our Saviour did and suffered, his Father's

glory was ever uppermost in his thoughts. "Father glorify thy name," was the prolonged prayer of his life, and we might say, "his ruling passion, strong in death." "I came down from heaven," he said, "not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me." And that, although the doing of his will and work involved the crucifixion of the tenderest feelings of humanity. "Even Christ pleased not himself." Human nature recoiled at the prospect of the sufferings that awaited him, and prompted the prayer—"Father, save me from this hour"—"if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." But submission to his Father's will, and zeal for his glory, nobly triumphed over the feelings of nature, and nerved him meekly to rejoin, "But for this cause came I unto this hour"—"nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt."

Although, as the sinner's substitute and surety, he had even to lay down his life—for "this commandment had he received of his Father"—yet he flinched not from it, but went courageously forward, and was "straitened until it was accomplished." He "became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." His death was the culminating act of his obedience. And all the more trying it was to flesh and blood, the more signal a test did it furnish of his obedience, and therefore all the more glorifying it was to his Father in heaven. Without this crowning act, he felt as if his purpose would remain unfulfilled, and his work unfinished. But when, upon the cross, as with the

voice of triumph, he exclaimed, "It is finished," then was the topstone put upon his great redemptive work, amid shoutings of grace, grace unto it! And then were his own words, as anticipative of the final issue, literally verified—"I glorified thee on the earth, having accomplished the work thou hast given me to do."

What an unparalleled amount of work, divine and blessed work, was crowded into those few brief, yet eventful years of our Lord's ministry on earth. After recounting his manifold labours and sufferings, one of the evangelists says, by way of winding up the wonderful story—"And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written."

What a striking combination of praying and working, of doing and suffering, is presented to us in the life of Christ! What devotion! what self-abnegation! what self-immolation! What ardent, irrepressible, indefatigable, unquenchable love! What flaming, burning, self-consuming zeal!

What a life work! Take but one day's work. How brimful it seems to be of the ministries of love, the miracles of mercy, and the marvels of grace! What, then, shall be said of the whole? What tongue can adequately speak of it! What pen faithfully portray it! If a summary were to be given, no better could be framed than that furnished by our Lord himself—"I have glorified thee on the earth."

What a grand epitome of a life! What a marvellous and matchless autobiography! What a sublime confession from the lips of truth! It is the master-key to our Lord's whole earthly story. It is the golden thread that runs through warp and woof, and makes it literally a web of gold. To glorify his Father in heaven, was the one idea that filled the whole horizon of his being, enlisted and absorbed all his energies, sanctified and ennobled his whole life, and crowned, as with a diadem of resplendent glory, his death on the cross.

Well, but if such was Christ's life-work, what, we ask, is ours? "As he is, so are we in the world." Our mission has not a few points of resemblance to his. In his prayer to his Father for his disciples (and it is true of them all in every age), he says—"As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world." He repeated these words after his resurrection. Some one has said, that "God, having one only son, made a missionary of him." He sent him forth on a great mission into the world. He sent him to fulfil his will and to finish his work. And the same is true of all his adopted sons. Every son is a servant, and every servant, like Christ himself, has a mission on earth, a life-work to do here. And well might each of them say, with their Lord and Master, "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day."

Without entering into details, we might gather up our life-work into a single sentence, and, borrowing

the language of our Lord, we might say our chief end is—To glorify God on the earth. Of course, this end will be accomplished in us, by ways and means very different from those by which our blessed Lord attained it. For he came as a sin-bearer, and glorified his heavenly Father, by working out a perfect surety-righteousness, and enduring the penalty of sin for us. But here lies the resemblance between his life and ours, that as servants, and yet sons, we are to make the will of our Father in heaven our supreme rule, and his glory our chief end and aim in life. “Whether, therefore, ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.”

Thus the humblest life will be consecrated. Thus the humblest work will be crowned. It will grow heroic and kingly in our hands. It will even gather a kind of divinity around it. God will be glorified in us, and our lives made glorious by reflecting his glory.

But alas ! how may all blush for shame, to think how little they have laid it to heart to give glory to God ! In this lies our sin and condemnation. “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.”

“ What hast thou done for God, my soul ?
Look o'er thy misspent years and see ;
Cry from thy worse than nothingness,
Cry for his mercy upon thee.”

If, however, we have begun at all to realise and live for that great end, the glory of God, let us not rest

contented without reaching after a higher Christian life—a life of more entire, unreserved consecration to God. Let us oftener look to our great Pattern, and study his grand model-life. Let us hang before our mental eye the immortal picture of his life-work, as painted by himself—

“I have glorified thee on the earth.”

(II)

The sphere of the life-work.

It is on this earth of ours. Jesus said, “I have glorified thee *on the earth*.” And what applied to him, applies to his followers.

How wonderful that this earth should have been selected as the theatre of such marvellous events as the incarnation, obedience, sufferings, and death of the Son of God! How wonderful that this planet of ours should have been singled out from among the teeming worlds that people the immensity of space, as the favoured spot on which the incarnate Son of God should tread with his blessed feet, where he should sojourn and travail for thirty and three years, and where he should at last be lifted up on a cross of shame, a spectacle to angels and to men!

How strange that in a world such as this, which was up in revolt against its Maker, there should have been such a wondrous display of the divine compassion, forbearance, and love, as was probably nowhere else

paralleled throughout all the realms of God's wide universe! Perhaps it was just because it was a revolted province of the Almighty, that such a display was possible. At all events, it was this fact that so signally enhanced and illustrated the love of God in the mission of his Son into our world, and so commended the love of Christ in coming into our world, and there, in our nature, obeying, suffering, and dying in our room.

Moreover, it was the state of our earth at the time he came; that rendered it such a theatre, at once for the exhibition of his own character, and for the glorification of his Father in heaven. The wickedness of the world, which had grown to such a pitch, was, as it were, a dark back-ground, which made his pure and perfect character stand out in all the bolder and brighter relief. He appeared among men as "a lily among thorns," as a lamb in the midst of lions, yea, as "the light of the world" amid surrounding darkness.

How were his meekness and patience displayed amid the rude buffettings, reproaches, and insults that were heaped upon him! How were his sympathy and compassion called forth in relieving the wants and woes of so many poor sufferers! How was his power attested in raising the dead bodies, and yet more in quickening the dead souls of men! How was his love commended in consenting to become the sin-bearer, and suffering the just in the room of the unjust, and laying down his life even for his enemies! How was his fortitude tried, and yet seen to triumph, in the midst of the

excruciating sufferings he endured! How was his devotion to his Father's will approved in drinking and draining, despite of his speechless agony, the bitter cup that was given him to drink! And how was his spirit of forgiveness manifested on the cross, when, in the presence of his very murderers, he could lift the cry to heaven, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!" In short, how did his holiness shine forth amid all the sin and corruption of a world lying in wickedness, and pre-eminently amid the horror of great darkness that wrapped his soul in his expiation for sin on the tree!

All the way from the manger to the cross, his eye seemed to rest on the glory of God, as the burning goal of his earthly life. In early childhood we hear him say—"Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" And as the end drew near, and he breathed forth his last great intercessory prayer, he opens with the profound petition, "Father, the hour is come: glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee."

A glory-track followed his footsteps all along his marchings through our world. Truly and emphatically could he say, "I have glorified thee *on the earth*." On this very earth, where God was so basely dis-honoured by the creatures he had made, did his well-beloved Son gather in the richest harvest of glory to his name. Even on the cross of shame, where human wickedness and fiendish malice seemed to triumph, was the glory of God rayed forth in the most illustrious

manner. Never was the divine law so magnified as when the King's own Son hung upon the accursed tree. Never were the divine perfections blazoned forth in such peerless majesty, and blent in such glorious harmony, as when, around the cross, "mercy and truth met together, righteousness and peace kissed each other."

During our Lord's life and up to his death, it might be said that this earth of ours became a magnificent platform, and Calvary's cross a glorious high throne, to proclaim to all the principalities and powers in heaven, as to all the inhabitants of earth, the manifold wisdom and matchless love of God, "that God in all things might be glorified, through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion, for ever and ever. Amen."

And as to the Saviour himself, so to all his followers, this earth of ours, and this life of ours upon it, afford the grandest sphere for glorifying their Father in heaven. Not in heaven, but on earth, is the noblest opportunity presented, that ever can be enjoyed by a creature, of glorifying his God and Father. Not in heaven, but in this present world, this sinning, suffering, sorrowing world, and in this tried, tempted, struggling life of ours, every one of us has an opportunity of glorifying God, such as angels might even envy us for, and such as we shall not again enjoy to all eternity. Yes, verily, there are many ways and means of glorifying God here, on this earth of ours, from which we shall be for ever shut out, when we die

Here and now we can bring glory to God, by exercising, as sinners, repentance toward God, and faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ; by approving our fidelity to the cause of truth and righteousness; by manifesting our love to God and man, and even to our enemies; by cultivating the Christian temper; by a spirit of self-denial, and of submission to the divine will; by our sympathy with the suffering and sorrowing; and by our efforts to teach the ignorant, to save the lost, and to extend and establish the Redeemer's kingdom on the earth.

Yes, indeed, this earth on which we now tread affords a rich and rare, and never-recurring opportunity of exercising and exhibiting such graces, and rendering such services as these.

Only on this earth, and during this short life of ours, is faith unto salvation a possible thing. Only here is a Saviour offered, and in no way can we glorify God so much as by a personal, present, simple, and childlike trust in Jesus. Faith is the highest homage the sinner can pay to the truth of God, and to the God of truth. But if we let this life go by, and that offer go by with it, without embracing it, never, through all eternity, will the like offer be made again. Not only was it true, that the Son of Man had power, while on earth, to forgive sins, but it is also true that he has power now in heaven, only to forgive sins on earth. There is no forgiveness in the other world—there is none in hell. No ray of light from Calvary's cross

will ever stream into the pit below. Jesus Christ will never go to preach to the spirits in prison there. Notwithstanding all the ingenious attempts to disprove the eternity of future punishment, the Scripture, fairly and honestly interpreted, does not seem to leave the shadow of a hope to those hearers of the gospel, who have lived and died, neglecting and rejecting the great salvation.

Then again, while here, even by reason of the very opposition of God's enemies, and the treachery of professed friends, and the seductions of an evil world, we may all the better approve our loyalty to God, and his truth; whereas in heaven there will be no enemies to assail, no apostates to seduce, and no temptations to allure.

Here, also, the continued warfare we have to wage between the flesh and the spirit, enables us to magnify the power of divine grace in us, by our preference of God's interests and honour to our own sensual gratification. But in heaven that conflict will have ceased, and with it the power to glorify God in that way.

Then here the ills and sorrows, the losses and crosses of life, our personal and relative afflictions, afford us the opportunity of glorifying God in the fires, by our faith, and patience, and resignation to his will. Nothing is more pleasing to God than when we trust him in the dark, and, putting our hand in his, suffer him to lead us along, content to "walk by faith, and not by sight." But in heaven there will be nothing

to try our patience, or trouble our peace. There will be no dark providences to exercise our faith. There will be no collision between God's will and ours, and so no place for resignation, and no call for submission. The promises of God will then all be translated into reality, and so the glass of faith will drop from the eye, as superfluous, in the world of bright and glorious vision.

Here the poverty and privations, the wants and woes of our fellowmen, and, above all, the tribulations of the saints, afford us scope for the exercise of our Christian compassion, and sympathy, and love. But in heaven there will be no suffering members of Christ to need our sympathy, and no paupers to need our alms in those mansions of light.

Here the injuries and the wrongs inflicted on us give room for Christian forbearance and forgiveness. Persecutions for righteousness' sake put it into our power to love our enemies, and to pray for them that despitefully use and persecute us. But in heaven the god-like grace of forgiveness will not be called into requisition, as there will be no enemies nor injuries to forgive—nothing to hurt or to destroy in all God's holy mountain.

Lastly, we have here the most splendid opportunities of manifesting our love to the Saviour by winning souls over to his side, and swelling the conquests of his grace. And even the very hindrances that stand in the way furnish all the better a test of our self-

denial, and liberality, and zeal in the Redeemer's cause. Oh! what honour it puts on us, and what glory it brings to God, to save a soul from death, and add another jewel to Immanuel's crown! There is not an angel above but would spread his wings and speed his flight to earth on such an errand, and be willing to spend ever so long time in leading back a solitary wanderer to the fold. But, in heaven, the cause and kingdom of Christ will be triumphant, and will not need our prayers, our offerings, our efforts. The number of the redeemed from earth will be completed, the royal banquet-hall filled, and the mystery of God finished. Then will be celebrated the great harvest-home, because the golden grain will all be gathered in.

"No working then,
No souls to warn and win, all gathered sheaves.
Say, shall we have our fruit or sheaf to bring, or
only leaves?"

While, as we have seen, there are many ways in which God may be glorified by the life here, there is also a deep sense in which he may be magnified by our death, as well as by our life. Our Lord signified by what death Peter should glorify God. So every Christian, in dying, may do the same. And he can do this but once—on this earth—since the redeemed in heaven will die no more. An eminent Christian once said—"It's worth being born, just to die."

Thus, then, it is manifest that on the theatre of this earth on which we now tread, we can most signally

glorify our Father in heaven, by the exercise of such Christian graces, and the discharge of such Christian duties, as we have named, and which will either not be needed, or be superseded and swallowed up amid the glories of heaven. Not in the golden streets of the New Jerusalem, not in the verdant plains of the Paradise above, but here on the busy battlefield of earth, amid the strife of tongues, the clash of arms, and the shout of battle, can we best attest our devotion to the will and work, the honour and glory, of our Father in heaven.

Let all then realise on what a high vantage-ground they stand, as workers for God, while tenants of earth and occupants of time. Let all learn what a royal inheritance life is, and to what grand account it may be turned—what a rich and responsible privilege it is to live—to live on this earth—to live in this present world—and, we may add, to live in this present age.

“ ‘Tis a great gift of God to live after our Lord.”

Especially so, in these latter days of the Son of man.

Amid the confused noise of warring elements, the temptations that assail, the doubts that perplex, the conflicts that rage, and the spirit of unrest which is abroad, we should feel it an honour to witness for God's truth, and to stand up for Jesus in the world. Instead of lamenting that our lot has fallen in troublous times, let us rejoice that we have here all the grander a field for glorifying our Father in heaven.

Never, in many respects, was there such an enviable

age to be born in, and to live in, as now. Men's minds are wakening up from the torpor of former times, the genius of invention is busily at work, the spirit of inquiry is stirring men's minds to their depths, great principles are being evolved, great problems are being wrought out, long-standing abuses are being swept away, and fields of Christian usefulness are being opened up, such as were never dreamt of before. If only then we have faith to enter in, and grace to be faithful, it is a grand thing to live in this age.

And oh, how anxious should we be to make the most of our golden opportunities! How anxious, while yet dwellers on this earth, to score our mark upon it! How ambitious to signalise this age, and this earth of ours, this sin-cursed earth, where God and Christ and truth have been so dishonoured by us and others, by making it the sphere of our most earnest and unwearied efforts to retrieve the honour of God's name, to spread afar the Saviour's most renowned fame, and show forth his mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of his kingdom!

Well might every Christian be filled and fired with the ambition, which flamed forth from the breast of one of the noblest warriors that ever buckled on the Christian armour—"Neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God."

(III.)

The consummation of the life-work.

Our Lord speaks of "having finished the work" which his Father had given him to do. But how could he say so at this time, when the most difficult part of it—the agony of the garden and his decease at Jerusalem—were not yet accomplished? Because his life was now nearing its close; and to his foreseeing eye, his life-work was as good as done.

Faithful through life, as a servant and as a son over his own house, he was fully persuaded that he would be found faithful unto death, and by his accomplished decease, give the finishing stroke to that stupendous work which his Father had given him to do. Having glorified him on the earth, he felt assured he would magnify him by his death, as by his life. Indeed, he spake as if, by this last act, he would glorify him even more than in any other way. "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life." And he did lay it down, he did drink the bitter cup, and in the very act of doing so, fulfilled his own anticipation, as he exclaimed, with the shout of a conqueror—"It is finished."

How anxious and eager we are to catch the last words of the dying! But never were such precious and pregnant words uttered, as those that fell from the parched lips of the expiring Saviour. If, while he

hung on the accursed tree, there had been, as we may well suppose, a breathless silence all heaven over, what an outburst of rapturous song must have followed the triumphant exclamation—"It is finished!"

Now, how was it that our blessed Lord was enabled to bring his life-work to such a glorious consummation? Some may say—Because in him was the mighty power of God—because in him humanity was allied to almighty strength. Doubtless! and yet his humanity was not superseded nor over-borne, but, in all its actings, was true to its own instincts, and depended on its own energies. His human life was passed under conditions and surroundings similar to our own. He was not exempt from the laws that affect ordinary mortals, although, above and beyond the burdens that fall to others, he had burdens to bear that no one else could share. Wherein, then, lay the secret of his success, viewed from the human standpoint? Only by his steadily, persistently pursuing his great work day by day, and hour by hour, till at length it was consummated and crowned. He filled up each year, and day, and hour, with its own appropriate and allotted work.

In the carpenter's shop he toiled on year by year, week by week, day by day, quietly and continuously, until the appointed time came to enter on his public ministry. And then during the few years that it lasted, he just went about his work in the same spirit of earnest, patient, cheerful, and courageous diligence, never seemingly at a loss what to do, never taking a wrong

step, never having to unsay what he had said, or to undo what he had done; doing the right thing at the right moment; never out of temper, out of tune, nor out of time; taking up each duty just as it came up before him; doing only one thing at a time; doing with his might whatever he did; working the works of him that sent him while it was day, until the night came; and as its shadows were gathering around him, he could say, in a sense that no other has ever been able, or ever will be able, to say—"I have finished the work thou gavest me to do."

But although only at an infinite distance any of us can follow Christ, still it is our duty, and ought to be our ambition, to follow him as closely as we can, as it is only thus that we can prove ourselves his disciples. His watchword to every one of his people is—"Follow me." And certainly there is very much we may all learn from the life of Christ to show us how we may best overtake and accomplish our life-work on earth.

First, *our work must be done in dependence on divine strength.* Nothing else, and nothing less, will suffice. But how is it to be obtained? Treasured up in Christ, it may yet, as we have seen, through faith be drawn into us. It flows into the soul, in its union and communion with him.

The cross is the starting-point for our life-work. We work, not towards, but from the cross—not for life, but from it. First, life *in* Christ—then life *on* Christ—then life *for* Christ. United to him by faith,

we live a life of faith upon him, so as to be able to say—"It is not I that live, but Christ liveth in me"—it is not I that work, but Christ that worketh in me. One of the most essential factors in our life-work, is that we be fellow-workers with Christ.

If we attempt to work in our own strength, we must fail. Even our seeming successes will be failures. But working in the strength of Christ, we cannot but succeed. There are two texts that every Christian should lay side by side, next his heart—"Without me ye can do nothing"—"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

Again, *our work must be done piecemeal*, if we would overtake it all, and have it finished at last. This also we learn from the life of Christ. His strength was not expended in one sublime effort. It was put forth in a daily round of duties. His work was accomplished bit by bit. And so our work is not to be consummated by a succession of bold efforts or bounds, by flashes of zeal, or fits of working. It is to be done by persistent, unflagging industry, by "*a patient continuance in well-doing.*" As each day has its own allotted work, and as sufficient for the day is the work as well as the evil thereof, we should strive to do the work of the day in the day, so as not to turn over the work of one day upon another. There is deep philosophy in the art of living by the day, of living only a day at a time.

If we look forward to the future, and contemplate

our life-work, whether of doing or suffering, in the aggregate, it would fill us with despondency, if not despair. But if we split it up into its segments, and deal with it in detail, we shall find, by the help of God, that it is rendered possible and practicable, if not pleasurable and easy; just as the man who, on being put to the test of breaking a bundle of rods, could not do it by any effort, so long as they were tied together, but loosening them, and breaking them one by one, was able gradually, yet easily, to accomplish the feat.

So now, if you are told what your life-work is, and if you think of life as a whole, and mass all its duties and responsibilities, cares and sorrows, together, you may feel as if you would sink under the burden. But when your Heavenly Father comes each morning, and says to you, "Now try, by my grace helping you, to redeem this day for me," you feel as if the thing were brought within a reasonable and redeemable compass. If you had only one day to spend, you feel as if, by God's help, the day's burden might be borne, and the day's duty done. Well, let us feel, each day, as if we had but *that* day to live, and let us try to improve it, as if the issue of life hung on that day alone. And so let us go on, in the strength of God the Lord, taking up and turning to the best account each day as it comes up, and by so doing we shall at length overtake the life-work given us to do.

If, now, a teacher were to say to one of his scholars — "Here, my boy, take this large copy-book, and fill

it up carefully by such and such a time," the boy might feel discouraged, thinking what a large space he had to fill up by the given time. But when his teacher comes to him, and encouragingly says to him—"Now, my boy, here's a clean page for you, which you will fill up to-day, with as good writing and as few blots as you can, and day by day write a fresh page, until the book is finished,"—then the boy sets to with all his might, as feeling that the work is quite manageable; and on he goes day by day, filling up one page after another, until he completes the whole, and the book is sent home to be inspected and approved by his parents.

And thus it is that God, morning by morning, presents us with a new page of life, and seems to say to us—"Now, take this day, and try to fill it up with blessed work for me—seize and improve all its opportunities, both for getting and for doing good—redeem its golden hours—and beware of blurring the page with the ugly inkspots of sin." And then at the close of the day, we can imagine the page, all written over and filled up with work of some kind or other, to be sealed up, and placed beyond the possibility of any erasures or emendations, and kept thus till the end of the days. And so day by day is our life-work unrolled, and given out to us in such manageable portions, that we may take it up and carry it through to a successful issue.

While every successive day is like a page of life, yet

as page is added to page, we may say, at the end of the month, that we have closed another chapter, and at the end of the year, another volume of life. And all the different volumes of the different years we spend will go to make up the annals or chronicles of our earthly lives. And when they are all finished, the iron clasp of death will bind them firm and fast for ever.

How solemn to think of the finished story of life—of the closed and clasped record of a human being's sojourn on earth! And what will be the sum and substance of that record in the case of each of us? Just what we *have* made it, just what we *are* making it now, by the complexion of our daily lives, by the kind and character of each day's work. The manner in which we spend each separate day and hour will go to determine the significance and value of life as a whole.

Here, then, comes in the practical question, into which my life-work resolves itself. How shall I spend each day, so as to turn it to the best account? The likeliest way to make each day "a good day," is to begin it by seeing God's face first, asking counsel of him, and commanding ourselves to his heavenly grace and guidance, cherishing a prayerful spirit throughout the day, trying to remember "Thou, God, seest me," and enduring as seeing him, and having a habitual intention in all things to please him; and then, at the day's close, coming and telling God how we have spent it, thanking him for mercies received, lamenting opportunities let slip, asking forgiveness for sins and errors

committed, and praying that our very failures and faults each day may make us more humble and more vigilant the next. In this way a salutary check might be imposed, and a needful spur given. And thus might our lives become sweeter and purer, nobler and diviner, day by day.

Once more, *our work should be done under the habitual impression that we have only a brief allotted time for it.* This thought was evidently present to the mind of our Lord, as a powerful incentive to work. "The night cometh, when no man can work." And if he, who knew no sin, was open to this impulse, how much more do our sinful and sluggish natures need it? Let our minds, then, be duly stirred by it. Let us not only strive to do the work of each day in the day, but remember that our days are numbered, that they fly swiftly past, and that to each of us time will soon be no more. Indeed, so short is life, that, even as a whole, it is compared to a day. And with how many is it true that "the day is far spent, and the night is at hand?" And what a stimulus to active diligence should be furnished by the thought of the fast-approaching night!

Soon and suddenly may the hand of death lay an arrest on all our work here. It has, indeed, been said that "every Christian is immortal until his work is done." But let no one defer his work, presuming on such immortality. Be it our ambition that, when death comes, he may find us at our post, and that our

death-stroke may give the final touch and finishing-stroke to our life-work here.

Such a noble ambition would surely be in a fair way to be fulfilled, if only our life-work were done in the spirit that breathes forth in the following letter of Dr Doddridge to an absent friend: "My days begin, pass, and end in pleasure, and seem short because they are so delightful. I have more of the presence of God than I ever remember. He enables me to live for him, and to live with him. When I awake in the morning, I address myself to him, and converse with him; and he meets me in my study, in secret and family devotion. It is pleasant to read, pleasant to compose, pleasant to converse with my friends at home, pleasant to visit the sick, the poor, pleasant to write letters of necessary business, by which any good may be done, and pleasant to preach the gospel to poor souls, pleasant in the week to think how near another Sabbath is; and oh! how much more pleasant to think how near eternity is, and that it is but a step from earth to heaven!"

But alas! how far behind do we come! How little do we realise the shortness of time, and the nearness of eternity! How many precious opportunities are let slip! How much work left undone! And how many things done amiss!

Ah! had we worked instead of wished,
And lived more nearly as we prayed,
How different had the entries been
By the recording angel made!

Are there any who, in reflecting on the wasted and irrecoverable past, are like to lose heart, and almost despair, in looking forward to the future? Despond not—despair not. There is room for repentance. There is time to return to God. And returning now to him with weeping and supplication, and dedicating yourselves from this hour to his service, you may yet make your lives grand, and do noble work for him. Let not Satan tempt you recklessly to throw away the remainder of life, because you may have foolishly squandered the past. Don't be like the school-boy who, having blurred and blotted some pages of his copy-book, grows careless in writing the rest. All the more should you re-double your diligence and zeal for the future. If you have trifled before, begin to work now. In writing a letter, as your space grows less, you try to crowd the more into it. So let it be with the closing years of life. Put all the work into them you can. Think of the last three years of our Lord's life, how brimful of blessed work! Think, too, of the closing years of some, converted late in life. Some have put more into a few years, aye, even a few hours, than others into a life-time. Some brief postscripts are better than whole letters. The gleaning of some is better than the vintage of others.

And yet let the bitter reflections arising out of mis-spent years in the past be a solemn warning to the young to devote their youth to God. Happy those who begin early, and thus have a good start in the

race.' If called early away, the sooner they will reach the goal and grasp the prize. And if spared, what a glorious career opens up before them—a bright and ever-brightening pathway of glory, honour, and immortality! Having the foundations laid in youth, what a splendid superstructure might be reared—what a pyramid of moral worth and of Christian usefulness, to the praise and glory of God!

Who, then, is willing to offer himself to the Lord? What fresh young life will be laid upon the altar? Happy, thrice happy the youth, who has the grace and courage to say—"Whatsoever others do, as for me I will serve the Lord."

Old or young, let all beware of a shipwrecked life, a wasted existence, a blasted immortality, a lost eternity. While life is such a grand inheritance, if rightly improved, the remembrance of it, if squandered in slothfulness, selfishness, and sin, will be one of the bitterest ingredients in the cup of woe. Agonising, indeed, will be the reflection that "the harvest is past, and the summer ended," if we are not saved. A lost life will certainly be followed by a lost eternity. We shall throughout eternity be harvesting the fruits of our lives here. "As a man soweth, so shall he reap. He that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; and he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."

VII.

WORK FINALLY REWARDED.

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“And I heard a voice from heaven, saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.”

REV. xiv. 18.

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“The evening now hath come,
And stars shine out on high,
The darkness draweth o'er the earth,
The working time is bye.
Now fold the weary hands
Upon the quiet breast;
Thou faithful one, thy work is done,
Now enter into rest.”

M. CLAPHAM.

ARK! a voice calls from heaven. It is a clear, articulate, audible voice. For John heard it himself, or received it from the angel who heard it, and who was sent to “signify to him the things which must shortly come to pass.”

With this voice there came a special message to him, to commit the heavenly oracle to writing. And so John’s writing is just the echo of that voice from the

other world, still ringing in our ears, and down through all the ages. Only listen to it. "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." With breathless silence, and rapt attention, hear it. "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, from henceforth."

What a precious message to be wafted to this dying world of ours! When our friends take their departure from us into the spirit-world, fain would we follow them, to know whither they have gone, and what they are doing. But from the moment of death, an inscrutable cloud of mystery seems to hang between them and us, and to separate us from them, as by an infinite distance. We may call aloud to them, but they give us no response. They seem heedless alike of all our sobs, and cries, and tears. "Oh that they might speak but one word," we say within ourselves, "and break that awful silence! Oh that some one might come back from that strange, mysterious land, to assure us of the happiness of our friends, and how they are employed, and whether they are still conscious of what is going on here!" Yet no one returns, or at least from no one who, like Lazarus, has returned for a time, has the wished-for secret oozed out.

But in the absence of all such intelligence, how inexpressibly comforting the assurance, conveyed by the voice from heaven, and committed to writing by the beloved apostle—"Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord!"

This voice, doubtless, came expressly for those who

should be persecuted for righteousness' sake, as we learn from the context that the faith and patience of the saints were to be severely tried. To fortify them in the prospect of coming trial, to sustain them in the hour of death, and to comfort their sorrowing friends after their departure, were these words spoken from heaven and recorded in this book. Yet not for their sakes only, but for the consolation of God's dying saints, and their surviving, weeping relatives and friends, in all ages to come. As a strain of divinest melody from the other world to this poor, death-doomed world of ours, has this voice come, assuring us that, "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord."

But how may we know for certain that the apostle had rightly caught up the message, and so committed it correctly to writing? Is there no dubiety about it? May we, indeed, credit the messenger and the message? May we receive it as oracular and divine? Yes, verily, for there is another witness than John, and a greater. "Yea, saith the Spirit." The Spirit adds his emphatic Amen. He seals and confirms the message, and on grounds so clear and cogent as might well satisfy all our doubts—"Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours and their works do follow them."

Altogether, John's heaven-sent and Spirit-sealed message suggests three deeply-interesting inquiries:—

Who are the blessed dead?

When their blessedness begins? And

Wherein their blessedness consists?

(L)

Who are the blessed dead?

Not all the dead are pronounced blessed. But only
“blessed are the dead that die in the Lord.”

Many a panegyric that the Bible does not indorse is uttered over the dead. Many an inscription is graven on tombstones that the judgment-day will reverse. There is no more common inscription to be found than the words before us. And no wonder, from the frequency of that and such-like inscriptions, although a child was once heard to say—“But where do the bad people lie ?” Alas, there is often too good ground for the bitter irony, which has been sometimes pointed at our churchyards—“There lie the dead, and there the living lie.”

In common *parlance*, you might suppose that death was a real gain to all. Under cover of the proverb, “We should speak nothing but good concerning the dead,” but yet totally misapplying it, many speak as if all became good when once they were dead, as if death made all square and right with a man, whatever may have been his previous life. Death is thought to be like a crucible, separating the dross from the pure metal, and while destroying the one, preserving and purifying the other. Or like some wonderful alembic, and by the power of some mysterious alchemy, it is

supposed that death may transmute a carnal into a spiritual man, a sinner into a saint. Hence no sooner is a man dead and gone, than he is admitted into the calendar of saints. And to throw out any doubts regarding his future safety and blessedness, is to be guilty of a breach of charity. But without pronouncing on individual cases (for the issues from death belong unto the Lord), let us hear what the voice from heaven spake to John—"Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord."

That voice did not say—"Blessed are all the dead," or "Blessed are the dead in general." But it limits the blessedness spoken of to those who die in the Lord. A very remarkable expression surely ! Although brief, yet very significant ! Let us try to get at its meaning.

What is it to die in the Lord? Doubtless, to die in union to the Lord. In order to die in the Lord, we must first be united to the Lord—we must live in and to the Lord. And then, living or dying, we are the Lord's.

Now faith is "the dear uniting bond" between the soul and Christ—between the sinner and the Saviour.

The moment a poor sinner believes on Christ, laying his whole trust for salvation on him alone, that moment Christ and he become federally and legally one—a spiritual, vital, and eternal union is formed between them. The believing soul may then, without presumption, exclaim, "My beloved is mine, and I am his." As it is no presumption to believe (the presumption is

all on the side of not believing), so having believed, we are fully warranted to appropriate Christ and all the benefits of his life and death to ourselves.

Now one of these benefits is the victory which Christ achieved over death, not for himself alone, but for all his believing people. "It is Christ that died." Ah yes, his death *was* death in the truest sense. It was a real death—a penal and propitiatory death—which he died in room of his people. But though a vicarious, it was also a victorious death. By suffering, he exhausted the penalty. In drinking, he drained the bitter cup, so that to his people the bitterness of death is past. His death has completely changed the aspect of death to them, and their relation to it. In a sense it has annihilated, it has *abolished* death to them. Robbed of its sting, death has no power to hurt or to destroy.

Christ's victory over death makes his people "more than conquerors" over the last enemy. As the late Dr Duncan said a few days before his death, and when he himself thought he was at the point of death—"I found that the one great mysterious death of Calvary was all I needed at the point of death." To the same effect the late Dr Candlish said, when dying, that although he could speak of no raptures, yet he rested on these two simple facts, "Christ died," and "Christ is mine."

Death is to the believer a crushed and conquered foe. It is dragged, among the spoils of conquest, at Christ's chariot-wheels. It is Christ's property, and as

such it belongs also to his people. Yes, indeed, while other men belong to death, death belongs to the believer. Instead of death lording it over him, he lords it over death. He is emphatically its lord and king.

Yet how differently might we judge, when we look on, and see death making such havoc of the corporeal frame, paralysing all the faculties, preying on the seat of life, and leaving only a miserable wreck of humanity behind—a dismantled and deserted temple—a temple all in ruins. Look at that once fair and lovely form, where beauty sat as a queen, now lying stiff and cold, pulseless and pallid, an inert and putrid mass, and say if death has not got the upper hand. See him sitting, as in savage triumph, over the wreck and ruin he has caused, and say if he is not the victor.

Well, certainly, there is much that is humiliating and even harrowing to the feelings in the accompaniments of death. And, doubtless, intended so to be. There is an experience in dying, through which all God's children have to pass, and from which, painful as it is, they may not be exempted. Yet even through that experience they may gain immensely. They may know, as otherwise they could not, what Christ has delivered them from, and what eternal debtors to his omnipotent grace and love they are. And then death may be allowed that temporary triumph, just to make his final discomfiture and defeat all the more signal. Only when these dismantled bodies, these shattered tabernacles, are raised up again, rehabilitated, and

fashioned into glorious bodies, like unto Christ's own body, will the saying that is written be brought to pass—"Death is swallowed up in victory."

But even in judging of death's seeming triumph, in the hour of dissolution, it may be that we are looking only at the outer tabernacle. And yet, in order to know who is the real victor, we require to look within. We need to know how it fares with the immortal spirit. For it is there that the tug of battle is. It is there that the victory is lost or won.

And how often, as we have both known and read, even amid sore bodily pangs, the utter prostration of human strength, and the total dismemberment of the earthly tabernacle, has the smile of triumph, in the presence of death's uplifted dart, been seen irradiating the face of the dying Christian, and the shout of victory, even with the death-rattle in his throat, been heard struggling for utterance—"O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." Even in the swellings of Jordan, a Christian was lately heard to say—"I am in the breakers now, but all is well, Christ is with me."

But it may be said, have not many Christians been perplexed with doubts and fears on their deathbed, and even died in despondency and darkness? Yes, indeed. As Cowper quaintly and feelingly remarked—"God sometimes puts his ain bairns to bed in the dark." But this is no sign that they have perished.

This hinders not their falling asleep in Jesus. This disproves not their final victory. Rather is it all the more signal and complete, if gotten in spite of all their doubts and fears.

But the fact is, to judge aright of the issues of the conflict, we would require to be on the other side, and to see the combatants emerging from the strife. We naturally look at the death-grapple from our own stand-point. We see the ravages of the last enemy, and may think he is carrying every thing before him. We may think he is riding rough-shod over the battle-field, and flaunting the flag of victory over the dismantled citadel. But, if we were behind the scenes, if we were looking on from the battlements of heaven, we might pronounce another verdict. We might see death, like a craven coward, with the pallor of defeat in his face, retreating from the field, and the weak believer coming forth exultant with the palm-branch of victory in his hand, radiant with celestial grace, and crowned with glory, honour, and immortality.

Such, indeed, is the actual verdict given by one who, from that other stand-point, could see the final issue, and whose verdict is according to truth. For there came a voice from heaven to John, not only telling himself, but bidding him write it, for the instruction of all ages to come, that "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord." And this verdict is attested and sealed by the Spirit of all truth—"Yea, saith the Spirit."

Now, mark, it is not said, "Blessed are the dying,"

—but “blessed are the dead—who die in the Lord.” No doubt, they are blessed even when dying. But the blessedness here spoken of presupposes the last struggle to be over—the warfare accomplished—the last sigh heaved—the last groan past. And when death has done his work, and done his worst, then the heavenly benison is pronounced—“Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord.” “Yea, saith the Spirit,” they *are* blessed, and none can reverse it. And accordingly we hear Paul say of himself—“to me to live is Christ, and to die (literally, to *have died*) is gain.” The blessedness and the gain are posterior to death. But who shall gauge the one, or count the other? They are both alike infinite and eternal.

How should the remembrance of this help to console the bereaved, when weeping over the loss of dear Christian friends! But, alas! we are too prone to fix our tear-bedimmed eyes rather on the greatness of our loss, than the greatness of their gain. We forget that the cloud, which looks so dark and gloomy to us, has a bright side as well as a dark. The side that looks heavenward is all brightness, with no darkness at all. They shine in the light of God, even as the stars for ever and ever. Lost to us, they are found to Christ for ever. And not only found to him, but *with* him. And then and thus they know, as none on earth ever can, that “to be with Christ is far better.” “So shall they ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.”

(II.)

But from what time may the blessedness of those who die in the Lord be said to begin?

The voice from heaven said, “Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, *from henceforth.*” And the Spirit confirmed what the voice affirmed. “Yea, saith the Spirit.”

“*From henceforth.*” From now, the point of time when the voice spake. And were not the dead blessed who died in the Lord before that time? Doubtless they were. As the writer to the Hebrews, speaking of the patriarchs, assures us that they all died in faith, desiring a better country, that is an heavenly, “wherefor God was not ashamed to be called their God, for he hath prepared for them a city.” But possibly the words “*from henceforth,*” may point to the times of persecution here predicted, and have been intended specially to fortify the faith of those who might be called to suffer for righteousness’ sake, or even to seal their testimony with their blood. Of them emphatically it might be said—“Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord.” To them specially death would be gain. “*From henceforth,*” from that time of bloody persecution, their blessedness, if called to die, would be doubly great. For “blessed are they that are persecuted for righteousness’ sake; great is their reward in

heaven." Their violent death would only enhance their rest and reward.

Yet the words "*from henceforth*" may also be taken to mean from the time of dying, in the case of all who die in the Lord. For whether they die a natural or a violent death, it is yet true that at the moment of their death, and *from henceforth*, they *are* blessed. The souls of believers do *immediately* pass into glory. There are no purgatorial fires, where they must previously be purified and refined. But "*absent from the body, they are present with the Lord.*" It is true the state into which they are introduced is different from what it will be at the resurrection. For till then it is only as disembodied spirits that they are to be present with the Lord. Yet even in that condition their blessedness may be said to be complete, in so far as their freedom from sin is concerned, and their conformity to the will and image of God, and their enjoyment of his presence, and participation in his glory. From the moment of dissolution they *are* blessed, as here pronounced by the voice from heaven, and the concurrent testimony of the Spirit.

But thus blessed they could not be said to be, if the state on which they entered at death were, as some would have it, a state of dreamy or unconscious repose. If it were so, what a collapse would Christ's words to the dying thief undergo—"To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise?" If it were so, why speak of the departed saint as being "present with the Lord?"

Or why should Paul have had such a "desire to depart and be with Christ," and say of it, "which is far better?" We may be sure that those whom the voice divine here pronounces blessed, really *are* so, and blessed in an inconceivably higher sense than a state of mere repose could imply, and blessed "from henceforth," and for ever, world without end.

But there are some who would apply the words "*from henceforth*" to the resurrection, the harvest at the end of the world, to which they suppose reference is made in the context, which speaks of the time when the harvest of the earth shall be fully ripe. Now, while adopting the interpretation already given, and believing that the blessedness spoken of as "*from henceforth*," refers to that which immediately follows death, yet we cannot doubt that that blessedness will be vastly augmented at the resurrection and "*from henceforth*." The blessedness at death, complete in the sense above explained, is yet capable of increase. The redeemed in heaven, blessed as they are in the presence and enjoyment of their God and Saviour, do yet aspire to be clothed again with their resurrection bodies, "waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." And then only will their redemption be fully come, and their blessedness perfect, when the glorified spirit shall be reunited to the glorified body, and their true manhood crowned with the diadem of immortality. "So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal

shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying which was written, Death is swallowed up in victory."

But the blessedness which will culminate in the resurrection begins at death, in the case of all who die in the Lord.

(III)

And wherein consisteth their blessedness?

"Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours, and their works do follow them."

There are thus two elements in the blessedness of "The dead who die in the Lord"—viz., *rest* and *reward*.

(1). *Rest*—"that they may rest from their labours." Now the Greek word for "labours" is suggestive of toil, fatigue, weariness. It is the same word as where Paul speaks of being "in weariness" oft. Indeed, the very mention of rest presupposes weariness. And how sweet is rest to the weary! What a beautiful picture is that of heaven as "the saint's everlasting rest!"

"There remaineth a rest to the people of God." Then, weary worker, think of that sabbatic and eternal rest. "Won't eternity be long enough to rest in?" Think how much is contained in the promise—"That they may rest from their labours."

Rest from toil and travail. The Christian has

usually to toil for his bread with the sweat of his brow. He has often a hard fight with poverty and misfortune, with worldly reverses and losses. He has sometimes a sore struggle with the frail body—"the spirit willing, but the flesh weak." The spirit may be too active for the slender frame, or the spirit itself may be oppressed, and even the willing worker may be overcome with a feeling of languor and weariness. He may be weary *in*, although not *of*, the Lord's work. The "labours more abundant," may overtask the strength. Mind and body alike may be ready to sink under the strain. Especially as age creeps on, and the faculties are crippled, and decay sets in.

But in heaven there will be rest from all this labour and travail. No more need for toils or tears in order to supply either temporal or spiritual wants. No more weary struggles or restless cravings. For "they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more: neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of water; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." No need any more to complain of languor or fatigue. For the glorified spirit will know no weariness, nor yet the resurrection body, to which it will be joined at last. True and tireless yoke-fellows, they will prove equal to all the services of eternity. Age will never silver the locks, nor palsy the hand, nor dim the eye, nor impair the strength. Joyous youth will

sit on each radiant brow. Every saint will wear the fadeless bloom of immortality.

Rest also from all care and anxiety. What a world of care this is! Every one carries his burden of anxiety. Every one has his daily cross. Difficulties and disappointments meet us everywhere. The worries, far more than the work of life, are like to wear us out. And then, not merely have we personal cares, but family, business, worldly cares, as also cares and anxieties about the cause and kingdom of Christ.

But, in heaven, there will be complete release to the redeemed from all these burdens. Their dangers and difficulties will be all surmounted. Their fears will be all laid to rest. Their crosses will be all dropped at heaven's door. Rather they will be turned into crowns. Earth's care will be completely met by heaven's cure. Not a line of care will ever again wrinkle the brow. No passing cloud will ever dim the light of the shadowless land. Not a speck will be seen all yon heaven over.

Rest, too, from all sickness and pain. Here body and mind are the prey of many infirmities and diseases. So close is the sympathy that, when one member suffers, all the others suffer with it. We are "fearfully and wonderfully made." We are all sensitive to pain—we shrink from suffering. Yet none are exempt—not even the Lord's loved ones. Yea, "whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth." "He, whom thou lovest, is sick." Sickness is the chastening of love. It is a

wholesome medicine, and pain has a salutary mission. Yet are they very trying to flesh and blood. Some Christians are life-long martyrs to suffering and pain. And it is not easy to bear long dull, or sharp stinging pain.

How cheering, then, the prospect of rest from all sickness and pain! In heaven, "the inhabitant will not say, I am sick." "Neither shall there be any more pain." No more sick heads, nor sore hearts. "No need to pull the night-bell of prayer." "There shall be no night there." At death, the Christian will leave behind him all his pains and pangs. As one when dying, being asked how he was, replied— "Nearly well."

"I go to life and not to death,
From darkness to life's native sky;
I go from sickness and from pain,
To health and immortality."

Rest, moreover, from temptation and persecution. The Christian life is full of temptation and trial. We are tempted of the devil. We are assailed with his fiery darts. He is ever plotting against us. He thwarts and opposes us all the way through. If he depart for a season, he often returns in greater force. His countless emissaries give him a kind of ubiquity. He is "the god of this world." And how artfully does he rule it for his own ends, in order to inveigle by its snares, to flatter with its smiles, and intimidate

with its sneers! If the sword of persecution is sheathed, the bow of malice is bent, and its shafts are like the piercings of a sword.

But in heaven there will be a complete cessation of all this weary warfare. Earth's din, and dust, and fever-strife will be over. We shall not hear the alarm of war any more. We shall be beyond gunshot of the enemy, and we shall be shielded, not only from all open assaults, but from all insidious approaches. The old serpent will never glide into the heavenly Paradise. The world, with all its enchantments, will be banished, and the tongue of calumny silenced for ever. We shall be quiet from all fear of evil. "The work of righteousness will be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever."

Then, last of all, and best of all, *rest from all sin and sorrow*. Sin is the believer's heaviest burden. It fetches forth his deepest sighs. "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Indwelling corruption is the cause of his bitterest sorrow. Many other sorrows, indeed, fall to his lot. He is often "in heaviness through manifold temptations." He knows the pang of bereavement. He often weeps with and for others. But, after all, sin is to him emphatically "the root of bitterness." It troubles his peace. It grieves the blessed Spirit. It hides his Father's face. Sin, in his own heart, and sin in the world, are his sorest labour and travail.

How joyous, then, to him will be the rest from all

sin and sorrow! At his death, sin will receive its complete and final overthrow. From the moment he first plants his foot on the golden shore, he will see that enemy again no more for ever. Nor yet any of its sable train. "Sorrow and sighing shall flee away." The reign of eternal righteousness, the jubilee of eternal joy, will be ushered in. All his highest hopes and aspirations will be more than crowned. The struggles of earth will be exchanged for the calm and rest of heaven, and the sorrows of time for the rapturous songs of eternity.

" Brief life is here our portion;
 Brief sorrow, short-lived care;
 The life that knows no ending,
 The tearless life is there.

O happy retribution !
 Short toil, eternal rest;
 For mortals and for sinners,
 A mansion with the blest."

What a blessed rest, then, will that be, into which the redeemed shall enter at death, when viewed only on its negative side, in relation to the evils from which it delivers them! But infinitely more so, when looked at in the light of the positive blessings it secures, the ineffable felicities and joys of the heavenly state.

While the redeemed will rest in heaven from all that is toilsome and troublesome here, let it not be thought that they will rest from all service there. Heaven is not a place of idle and inglorious repose.

Its rest will consist largely in service—in active, unflagging, joyous service, prompted by an ardent, quenchless, indefatigable love. There will be grand and noble work for all the saints in heaven—yea, work godlike and divine—work that will admit of infinite expansion and endless progression.

We may wonder sometimes what our departed friends are doing in heaven. But we may be assured that they are well and worthily employed, and fulfilling a higher and holier ministry in the temple of God, than amid the sins and imperfections of this lower world. “His servants shall serve him; and they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads.” They shall serve him, without weariness; for ever and ever. They shall be equal unto “the angels that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word.” “Praise ye the Lord. Praise ye the Lord from the heavens; praise him in the heights. Praise ye him, all his angels; praise ye him all his hosts; for his name alone is excellent; his glory is above the earth and heaven.”

(2). *Reward.* The redeemed will enter at death not only into rest, but reward. “Their works do follow them,” or rather, follow *with* them. Their works do not go before them, in the way of meriting heaven or its blessedness for them. There is no merit in good works. They can in no sense purchase a title to God’s favour here, or the enjoyment of him hereafter.

The blood and righteousness of Christ, received and applied by faith, form our only title and our only plea. But good works, by attesting our faith, serve to attest our title; and the spiritual exercises called forth in the doing of them, render us meet for being made partakers of the heavenly inheritance. Moreover, God is pleased to accept and even reward such works for Christ's sake. The reward, indeed, is all of grace. For after we have done all, we must confess "we are but unprofitable servants, and have done only that which it was our duty to do." Besides, whatever good works we may perform, it is only by God's grace that we are enabled to perform them.

Still, while grace reigns throughout, it reigns through righteousness. And God has consulted the interests of righteousness, in securing and requiring that his people shall be all righteous, and in opening the gates of the city only to "the righteous nation, that keepeth the truth." Even on the ground of personal character, it will be made patent to the whole universe that the difference between the righteous and the wicked was such as to justify the eternal separation to be made between them. Works will be appealed to at the great day as the criterion of character. Men will be judged by their works, and rewarded or punished accordingly. "We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."

Men's works will follow them, will go *with* them, into the other world. In one sense, it is not true that, as we brought nothing into the world, so we shall take nothing hence. We shall indeed take none of our earthly possessions with us—none of our goods or chattels—none of our estates, or bank-notes, or art-treasures—for these things don't count, and don't pass current in the other world. But the use we have made of these and other things, the use we have made of our time, our talents and opportunities, will all follow with us. Our conscience, our character and conduct, will all go with us. Our thoughts, words, and works will all accompany us. Death will not break the entail between us and them. They will form our inalienable heritage, our personal possession, for ever.

And, doubtless, when it is said of those who die in the Lord that "their works do follow them," it is meant that they shall do so, as a rich heritage and royal possession—that they shall do so in the way of securing a great and eternal reward.

Not, indeed, all their works—for many of them may rank among the wood, hay, stubble—but all their *good* and *gracious* works—their works of faith and labours of love performed with an eye to the glory of God. All such works, even those that quite escaped their own notice and recollection, such as a cup of cold water given to a disciple in the name of Jesus, or a mite lovingly cast into the Lord's treasury, or a visit of

sympathy to some poor sufferer, will be remembered and rewarded at last—Matth. xxv. 34-40.

There will, no doubt, be a fixed law or principle by which the reward will be apportioned to the nature of the work or service done. "Behold," says Christ, I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be." "As a man soweth, so shall he reap." All Christians will not reap alike. Those who made the best use of grace here will receive the largest measure of glory hereafter. Those who toiled most in the Master's service, will enter most fully into the Master's rest and the Master's joy. God is not unrighteous, to forget his people's work and labour of love. Those who abound in the work of the Lord will find that their labour was not in vain in the Lord. Specially will it be true, that those who suffer with Christ shall reign with him. "Rejoice," says the Apostle Peter, "inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings, that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy." Bright, indeed, will be the martyr's crown—great and glorious his reward.

But while different rewards, with higher or lower degrees of glory, will thus be meted out to different Christians, according to their works, yet in any and every case the utter disproportion between the greatness of the reward and the smallness of the works will be so vividly present to the minds of the redeemed, that, under an overpowering sense of their own

unworthiness, they will feel constrained to cast their crowns before the throne, saying, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created."

Looking, then, to the infinite blessedness arising out of the rest and reward promised to all Christ's faithful servants at death, and from henceforth, and for ever, should not all be encouraged to labour yet more abundantly in the work of the Lord, to labour on and not faint, till the Saturday evening of life shall come, and the vesper-bell shall tell them that earth's working time is bye, and that heaven's rest, the glorious Sabbath of eternity, is about to be ushered in?

"The golden evening brightens in the west;
Soon, soon, to faithful warriors cometh rest:
Yet, lo! there breaks a yet more glorious day."

But the blessedness of those who live to the Lord and die in the Lord, suggests the misery of those who live and die out of Christ—who die in their sins. As the blessedness of the former, so the misery of the latter will date from the moment they die, and onward for ever. While the former will rest from all their labours—from all their toils, and trials, and tears—there will be no rest to them. But, as in the case of those of whom the context speaks, "They have no rest day nor night." Alas! alas! it will be all night to

them. And if, in the long vigils of that never-ending night, a voice should cry—"Watchman, what of the night?"—never, never, could it be said—"The morning cometh."

But, blessed be God, that dark night has not yet closed in on any hearers of the Gospel. And if, in the case of any, there is the faintest desire to die the death of the righteous, and to have their latter end like his—

"BEHOLD, NOW IS THE ACCEPTED TIME:
BEHOLD, NOW IS THE DAY OF SALVATION."



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